



Speech by

**Hon. WENDY EDMOND**

**MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA**

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Hansard 26 August 1998

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Australian Health Care Agreement**

**Hon. W. M. EDMOND** (Mount Coot-tha— ALP) (Minister for Health) (9.47 a.m.), by leave: I would like to advise the House of the implications for Queensland of recent developments relating to the Australian Health Care Agreement, formerly known as the Medicare Agreement. Under the agreement made by my predecessor, the member for Toowoomba South, Queensland receives an extra \$103.5m in the current financial year, the incentive payment for signing early. Minus this incentive, the agreement would have been very poor, providing less to Queensland than had been provided in the previous year. On top of this, the Health budget would have had to absorb the previous Government's unfair tax on capital works, which has been abolished by my colleague the Treasurer.

Contrary to media reports and enthusiastic assertions from the member for Maroochydore, the latest renegotiation of the Australian Health Care Agreement with the other States and Territories has brought no significant benefit to Queensland. The member is either spreading deliberate misinformation or has an appalling ignorance of the facts. Certainly, we are receiving \$74.6m more than was forecast in the Health Forward Estimates for the current year. Unfortunately, those funds are not available to be used at Queensland's discretion. Of the total, \$38.4m is tied by the Commonwealth to existing programs, another \$21m will have to be used to fund activities which the Commonwealth has dumped and around \$25m is needed to maintain the current effort to cut elective surgery waiting lists.

For the information of members, I will table the break-up of this funding. My goal in placing this information on the public record is to make it clear that the magic pudding from which those opposite planned to fund our health system has now vanished. The public dollar is finite, particularly so when it comes from Canberra, and I am committed to working within those limits to provide Queensland with the best possible public health system.

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