



Speech by

**Hon. WENDY EDMOND**

**MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA**

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Hansard 16 September 1998

### **CENSURE OF MINISTER FOR HEALTH**

**Hon. W. M. EDMOND** (Mount Coot-tha— ALP) (Minister for Health) (6.15 p.m.): I move—

"That all words after 'House' be deleted and replaced by: 'note the Minister for Health's intention to maintain all existing specialist services at the Maryborough Base Hospital, including a fully maintained stand-alone intensive care unit, high risk obstetrics and high risk paediatrics and expand the range of health services provided in the Maryborough community.'"

Initially, before I answer some of the rantings and ravings from those opposite, I should like to update the House on progress today on the Maryborough Hospital's redevelopment and the delivery of services to the people of Maryborough. Further progress has been made overnight in meetings between Queensland Health Director-General Dr Robert Stable, hospital staff and medicos and the architectural and engineering teams. Talks focused on the operating theatres, the intensive care unit and the paediatric ward.

Following the talks last night and today, Queensland Health planners are looking urgently at the option of new ground-floor operating theatres. Systems are being finalised, including more flexible staffing arrangements and more efficient use of hospital beds to help staff maintain their skills and maintain the high levels of patient care at both the Maryborough and Hervey Bay Hospitals. Further, a senior medical administrator from Queensland Health, Dr Stephen Ayre, will be in the Fraser Coast district on Friday to continue working with health service staff and local health professionals. Dr Ayre, who is currently the Deputy Medical Superintendent at the Royal Brisbane Hospital, was assigned earlier this week. Dr Ayre's role will be to work with the region's medical staff to ensure quality and standards are maintained across the district. He will assess how existing medical services can be maintained and improved at the Maryborough and Hervey Bay Hospitals.

Let me say how pleased I am at the progress being made and the fact that the redevelopment is getting back on track. That has always been my aim: to deliver the people of Maryborough a modern, flexible hospital, in keeping with my election commitment to retain Maryborough as a major regional hospital. My commitment was not to put the redevelopment on the backburner, as the previous Minister did, and to forget about the redevelopment and the people of Maryborough. I believe that the people of Maryborough needed action. My plans were for a redevelopment creating 80 new jobs during construction. It was to provide a new building, incorporating two new, modern operating theatres; a recovery area; a post-operative lounge; allied health facilities; an admissions area; and a pharmacy. Phase 3 of the redevelopment, which did not exist under the previous Health Minister, and which he would not even consider, would allow for expansion if future growth increases demand. Every Queensland Health permanent employee who wanted a job would have one, and will still have one.

In relation to accident and emergency, what did we propose? No change! There was never any suggestion of it being changed. The Maryborough Hospital always was to have, and will still have, 24-hour accident and emergency services. It was never even proposed to change that. In relation to highway accidents, the helicopter retrieval service will continue to handle major accidents, as it does now. Maryborough will handle some patients and transfer others, as occurs now. In relation to the special care nursery, no change was ever anticipated. In relation to paediatrics, Maryborough kids will still be able to be treated, and always were going to be able to be treated, in the Maryborough Hospital, despite the lies spread by those opposite. The Maryborough Hospital will continue to perform the same

range of surgical specialties. The range of specialists will be maintained. Pathology remains. The kitchen remains. Administrative support remains. All of the support services that the member said were going will remain. To suggest that these services were being reduced was nothing more than a misleading fabrication. However, there were areas of concern.

We were concerned about ventilated patients and whether we could maintain the expertise with very small numbers—something like a dozen Maryborough patients per year—when clinical experts say that the hospital staff need 50 or 100 of those patients a year to maintain their skills. Queensland Health and I were concerned that the ICU staff handle that minimum number. I also considered moving the very small number of high-risk births to Hervey Bay because we were unable to guarantee after-hours specialist services. That is why we were considering that. We now have that agreement. That is something that the previous Health Minister could never get.

Time expired.

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