



Speech by

Hon. WENDY EDMOND

MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA

Hansard 12 November 1998

QUEENSLAND HEALTH

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

"To delete all words after 'notes' and insert the following—

- the record budget and new directions in mental health care across Queensland;
- the record health budget including \$61m in hospital recurrent budgets;
- the redevelopment of hospital and health facilities and expansion of health services, including CT scanners at Nambour, Toowoomba, Cairns and Bundaberg;
- the historic meeting of all stakeholders to progress the establishment of the North Queensland medical school at James Cook University;
- expansion of the range of health services provided at Maryborough Hospital; and
- the doubling of the final stage of the Cairns Base Hospital redevelopment budget.'."

This Government has delivered a record Health budget of more than \$3.7 billion. That is almost \$130m, or 3.6%, more than the coalition planned to spend on Health this year. That is almost \$300m more than the coalition's Health budget for 1997-98. Our Health budget includes \$61m extra in the hospital recurrent budgets—not \$2m extra in the hospital recurrent budgets that was in the May coalition Budget. We are putting \$621m into new and refurbished hospitals and health facilities and getting capital works unfrozen and back on track.

There will be no underspending, no lost jobs and no Horan's hospital tax—just jobs, jobs, jobs and modern health facilities. There will be 900 health jobs, 9,000 construction jobs and no Horan hospital tax. I emphasise that I did not start this; this plan was started in 1992 under the previous Labor Government. So much for the assertions of previous speakers!

Mr Johnson: You were a member of it.

Mrs EDMOND: Yes, but I did not, as Health Minister, stop it. The Labor Health budget includes more than \$125m in new initiatives and commitments made by us to the people of Queensland. Those initiatives and policies are aimed at improving and expanding all health service areas. Those opposite gave \$400,000 to palliative care. We will be giving \$5m a year to palliative care.

This Government is also picking up the tab for programs dumped by the coalition's colleagues in Canberra—the post-acute care program, the heart/lung transplant program and the day surgery program. This Health Minister went to the Cabinet Budget Review Committee and fought for a better deal for the Queensland health system.

Meanwhile, what is the Opposition doing? It has just launched its Mulgrave by-election campaign with a grubby little swipe at 63,000 Queensland Health staff, who are out there at the coalface delivering health care services. Shame on the Opposition, and particularly shame on the member for Gregory! I thought better of him.

Mr JOHNSON: I rise to a point of order. One thing I have never done is cast a slur on the people in Queensland Health or the 63,000 health workers. I find that offensive and I ask the Minister to withdraw the remark.

Mrs EDMOND: I withdraw. I still do not think any better of him. What is the coalition trying to do to these people? Is it trying to scare out of their wits all the people who rely on the public hospital system? Is that what it wants to do? While it is running around with its scare campaign, we are delivering health services and creating 900 extra jobs for health workers.

This Government has injected not \$1m or \$2m but an extra \$29m into mental health services—the biggest increase in history in a very neglected area. That means we will be spending more than \$270m on mental health services in Queensland—a 16% increase on the recurrent budget brought down by the coalition in May. The money is not for "Headlines" Horan's white elephants, it is for 200 extra mental health workers.

We are finally getting the north Queensland medical school happening. I am very pleased to be able to inform the House that today I had a long and fruitful meeting with the stakeholders in the medical school issue. I hope honourable members all take note of the joint communique that was issued and which I now table. We have agreed to move towards a multi-entry school, with both graduate and undergraduate positions. The Commonwealth has agreed to the allocation of 60 student places, consisting of 20 new places, 20 places transferred from the University of Queensland and 20 places transferred from other universities. This is happening. It is not some wishy-washy press release put out in the middle of an election campaign. We are bringing together all of the people we need to bring together. I will not do what the member for Gregory said and follow the example set by the previous Minister. I will not dump every decision that has to be made in Health in the too-hard basket, as he did because he could not make any decisions. This Government is prepared to work through the issues and deliver health services.

Time expired.
