



Speech by

**DESLEY BOYLE**

**MEMBER FOR CAIRNS**

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Hansard 24 August 1999

#### **QUEENSLAND HEALTH**

**Ms BOYLE** (Cairns—ALP) (6.46 p.m.): This evening I am very pleased to support the amendment and to provide an example for honourable members of how the Beattie Labor Government is getting the Hospitals Rebuilding Program back on track. I cite the Cairns Base Hospital as a fine example of how we have been able to get the building program back on track. It is a fine example of how the previous Health Minister failed the Hospitals Rebuilding Program, how he was not prepared to listen to the staff of the Cairns Base Hospital and how he was prepared, even when he did listen, to scale back the level of facilities and services in the redeveloped Cairns Base Hospital.

One of the first things that the new Labor Government and new Minister for Health did in the Cairns electorate was to appoint an independent consultant to reassess the Cairns Base Hospital redevelopment program and to take up just where we were and where the funds were and why it turned out that the staff were quite correct that there were not sufficient funds to provide the standards and facilities promised. Through that independent review, the staff of the hospital were proved right and the previous Minister was proved to be a failure. The evidence was in last year's budget, in which there was an increase of \$19.1m for the redevelopment of the Cairns Base Hospital. The staff were then able to believe that what they had been promised would be provided. That is now evident.

Last Saturday an open day was held and the people of Cairns were invited to view Block C, the new clinical services building, at the Cairns Base Hospital. Approximately 700 to 800 people had a look at it and said, "Thank heavens the Goss Government made the decision to do it and that the Beattie Government is in office so that we can get what we were promised." Over the next three years, \$40m will be provided in the State Labor Budget to complete the redevelopment. Over the next two years, Blocks A and B will be redeveloped progressively, and that renovation will be difficult for the staff. Nonetheless, that will produce a consistently high standard in fulfilment of the promise to the people of Cairns that they would have a hospital for the future on the best site in Cairns. The Minister is attending to the building program, reorienting it and getting it back on track.

Last Friday, on behalf of the Minister, I was pleased to announce that in the upcoming budget \$450,000 in recurrent funds has been allocated to increase intensive care services at the Cairns Base Hospital. That \$450,000 means that the total of six beds presently allocated, which has been problematic in terms of the level of demand for the intensive care beds for many months now, can be increased to eight. We have the space in the redevelopment, which is being completed by the Beattie Government, and now we have the funds for the additional staff required to manage the eight beds that are needed.

For the people of Cairns, this translates to somewhere around 9 or 10 full-time, permanent, year in, year out new jobs for Cairns. Mostly they will be nursing staff, but it is likely that some of the funds will be devoted towards backing up physiotherapy services and some for clerical services. This is jobs. This is also better care, more beds and less crowding at the hospital. But do honourable members know what it also means for the people of Cairns? It means that fewer patients will have to go south to Townsville or Brisbane. It really matters for their families when a loved one is at risk of dying that they can stay close to them in the home and around friends—the people who love them—in these times of trouble.

What we have now with this Health Minister is a Minister who is flexible, who knows that no building program can be set in stone and followed for the next two, three, five years, but that it requires

continual review, continual adjustment according—as in places such as Cairns—to rates of growth, changes in the services available in the private sector, changes in the demand for services and the needs, with always a focus on making sure that the people of Cairns as well as elsewhere in Queensland get their health services as close as they can to home as fulsomely as they could hope for, no matter what the circumstances.

My congratulations go to the Minister on the reorienting and the refunding of the Cairns Base Hospital. It is a fine example, indeed, of how the Beattie Government is getting the Health building program back on track.

Time expired.

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