



Speech by

## DESLEY BOYLE

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Hansard 26 August 1999

### HEALTH SERVICES

**Ms BOYLE** (Cairns—ALP) (6.19 p.m.): It was with great pleasure that I—

**Dr WATSON:** There was no amendment moved.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! To keep the numbers equal and to keep the speakers in the right sequence, I call the honourable member for Cairns.

**Mr BEANLAND:** I rise to a point of order. That is not the normal practice. I do not want to waste time, Mr Speaker.

**Mr SPEAKER:** You are.

**Mr BEANLAND:** But to be fair, that is not the normal practice and never has been. If there is no amendment moved—

**Mr SPEAKER:** It is 30 minutes for the Opposition and 25 minutes for the Government. I call the member for Cairns.

**Ms BOYLE:** It is with great pleasure that I enter the debate. We can only wonder when the member for Maroochydore will stop crying wolf. Quite frankly, the sooner the better, because the exaggerated claims and the prophecies of doom are sound and fury signifying nothing.

I am sure honourable members opposite really do know somewhere in the back of their minds that their constituents would like some evidence of informed argument, of alternative policies for the delivery of health services in Queensland. It is a hard ask, I admit, because that requires a consistent vision and comprehensive understanding of the very broad field that is health—of the diverse sectors of health and their interdependence— of health, financing and future demand. It is not the case that there is evidence of that understanding on the part of members on the opposite side of the House. By contrast, the Minister for Health, Wendy Edmond, has routinely demonstrated these characteristics and a sound grasp of the complexity of her portfolio.

The Beattie Labor Government, through the Health Minister, has a vision for the future direction of the public health system in Queensland. This future direction is premised on the concept of a sustainable health system to cope with increased demands and expectations. A sustainable health system is one that can take pressure off our public health system in the longer term, one which is unashamedly biased towards preventive health areas and health maintenance. This Labor Government believes that we need to focus on the preventive services and also build up community and non-Government sectors to support our public hospital system. We have a policy that seeks to support the expansion and integration of a preventive focus to Queensland Health.

This Government takes a holistic view of health. Accordingly, we recognise that health is not just about rehabilitation and treatment of ill health in hospital settings; it is also about the prevention of ill health in the first place; it is about supporting good health in the primary care setting; it is about community health, prevention, detection and early intervention; it is a paradigm that the right investment, used as a complementary mechanism, provides a seamless health system providing an unparalleled level of continuity of care. That is why this Government has pursued this agenda since taking office 14 months ago.

There are other changes afoot being brought to us by the finite public dollar and the spirit of competition in all sectors, including health. The health care environment is progressively characterised

by an open market where public, private and not-for-profit services compete for resources and clients or enter into partnerships to provide comprehensive health care. Particularly in regional areas, these partnerships between the public and the private sector can provide a level of service that would not otherwise be available in rural and remote areas of Queensland. This Government supports this concept, but only where it is clearly in the public interest. The same cannot be said of the Opposition, which sought to introduce this idea on an indiscriminate basis.

Given the penchant of the member for Maroochydore for hyperbole, dare I suggest the coalition's loving embracement of this concept revolved around a desire to achieve a veritable privatisation by stealth of the Queensland public hospital system. Privatisation by stealth is locking Queensland Health into a 20-year contract for two projects. That will cost nearly \$1 billion over 20 years without a cent in the forward estimates. How can the former Minister for Health hold his head up high in this Parliament? All thanks to the former Minister for Health, who signed deals—one just hours before the last election was called! The people at Robina and Noosa still think they are getting a public hospital when these are, in fact, private facilities.

Be warned Queensland: this is the sort of stuff you can expect should the coalition take over governing this glorious State. We can only ponder what other catastrophes would have befallen us had that previous Borbidge Government continued with privatisation by stealth. Can I suggest that their Tory mates in Canberra are probably the best indication of future directions for Tory health care should they gain power in Queensland? Their Canberra mates would rather prop up the private health insurance system and starve the public health system of \$1.7 billion of much needed funds. What a policy! What a policy failure!

There has been a 0.2% increase in private health fund membership. How pathetic! And they have the audacity to claim that this policy has been a runaway success! Pointing the finger at us is sound and fury signifying nothing, or maybe it is signifying something—signifying their avoidance of their own failure of their own privatisation by stealth. What about the Aboriginal health commitment? Queensland has more than 25%—

Time expired.

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