



Speech by

Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard 26 May 1999

NORTH QUEENSLAND MEDICAL SCHOOL

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (10.24 a.m.): Bloody-minded bureaucracy is jeopardising the first intake of students into the North Queensland Medical School next year. The Health Department is playing the politics of obstruction by refusing to release a promised \$8m in State funds to James Cook University to construct the school.

The sod has been turned but funding has dried up because the Humphrey Applebys of the Health Department are insisting on the medical school being accredited before handing over the money. However, I understand that the accrediting body, the Australian Medical Council, wants to see buildings before it will accredit the school. This is a catch-22 situation. I am calling on the Health Minister, Wendy Edmond, to bring her bureaucrats to heel by ordering the immediate release of the money. The medical school is going to happen. The delay in releasing funds, however, could mean another year of lost opportunity for training young local people who are desperately needed as medical professionals in rural and remote Queensland.

I know that this must be difficult for the Director-General of Queensland Health, Rob Stable, as an adjunct professor of the University of Queensland and an active member of the Australian Medical Council. However, in the interest of accountability, it would be appropriate for Dr Stable to publicly and privately distance himself from the lobby to block the James Cook University's plans for this medical school. It is essential for him to remove himself from any position where there is a perceived conflict of interest. The new medical school, initiated by the coalition Government and supported by the Labor Government, is widely hailed as an important step towards training rural medical students and improving the retention of doctors in the bush.
