



Speech by

## Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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Hansard 9 June 1999

### TOWNSVILLE AND TOOWOOMBA GENERAL HOSPITALS

**Miss SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—NPA) (11 p.m.): I am hearing disturbing reports about the lack of intensive care beds and stretched services at the Townsville General Hospital. Worried local doctors have told me that recently two patients could not be flown into this major regional centre because of the lack of intensive care beds. They were flown elsewhere, despite the fact that Townsville was the closest major hospital. I call on the Health Minister to reveal how many times the intensive care unit at this busy hospital is full and what plans the Government has to boost funding. I ask her: how many other people who clinically could have been treated at the Townsville Hospital if the beds were available have had to be flown elsewhere? I also challenge her to release information about how many operations have been cancelled because of the pressure on this unit. The lack of hospital beds has ramifications for other services in the hospital.

I table a letter from an elderly Ingham man who was admitted to the Townsville Hospital on 24 May this year. That man was awaiting serious heart surgery that was to take place the next day, but it was cancelled as there was not a bed available for him after the operation. The letter states—

"You will appreciate that as an elderly man, the thought of undergoing major heart surgery was extremely distressing for my family and I. The last-minute cancellation seriously exacerbated this distress and did nothing to improve my health at a time when I expected a degree of certainty. The delay also meant serious inconvenience to family members who had taken time off work and travelled hundreds of kilometres to be with me during this stressful time."

Another north Queensland man has raised with me the issue of the blow-out in the time needed to get an appointment at the Townsville district diabetic clinic. He has been told that his normally three monthly appointments will now be six monthly. He cannot get an appointment for six months. Obviously that is very worrying for someone who is trying to cope with a disease and who needs a certain level of support. I have written to the Minister about the matter and I call on her to reveal the waiting lists for the clinic. Without proper follow-up treatment and supervision, there are many complications of diabetes that in dollars are very costly and in human terms are very damaging.

I also understand that the Toowoomba hospital has suffered from incredible pressure on services and is looking at areas where it can cut costs. This is happening at a time when the Health Department is about to employ three new fat cats on salaries of \$180,000 each to form a new layer of management in the department. Contrary to the deliberate untruths that the Health Minister has told media outlets, under the coalition there was no management structure over health districts called zones. This is a new layer of management in the Health Department. I will table the line management structure that was circulated on 20 May this year by the Director-General of Health stating that this new structure will come into effect on 5 July 1999. I also table the coalition's line management structure which clearly shows that there was no zone management layer over the top of the districts. That proves that the Labor Party will do anything to lie and cover up when it creates fat-cat jobs that will cost services in our regions.

The Toowoomba Hospital is also struggling to get enough intensive care beds. I table a letter that cites another example of a patient whose operation was cancelled, once again because of the lack of intensive care beds. Beds are physically available at the hospital, but the hospital is not funded to be

able to use them. That is a major concern in another regional hospital, which has serious budgetary problems.

The Government's answer was to put in another layer of bureaucracy. Three salaries totalling \$180,000 are almost equivalent to the salary of a director-general. It is a disgrace that this Government is saying that that is not a major change. The Government should tell all the nurses, cleaners, laundry people, physios, occupational therapists, allied health workers and all the other people who work in the health services in this State that that is not a major salary package. The line management structures that I have tabled clearly show the lies of this Government, which says that it has not introduced another management layer. I table another document that shows that that level of management over the top of the districts did not exist under the coalition.

The Labor Party has a habit of paying for extra bureaucracy and cutting down on the services to the people who need them. It has created a very expensive, top-heavy bureaucracy with all these fat cats on salary packages, extra superannuation, cars and study leave, yet it does not deliver any extra services to the districts at the local level of management, which is what people need.

Time expired.

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