



Speech by

Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard 22 July 1999

SOUTH BURNETT HEALTH SERVICES

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (7.12 p.m.): The future of health services in the South Burnett region is still under threat. It was all steam ahead to implement the recommendations of a secret document, the South Burnett Health Service District Review of Functional Plan for Provision of Health Services, until the issue became public about three weeks ago.

This Government report, which I table, in black and white outlines ways to cut the costs in the area, including selling the Nanango Hospital, removing some 50 district hospital beds that are currently in use, centralising food services to Kingaroy and closing other hospital kitchens. I did not dream these things up. They came out of a Government report and there is absolutely no evidence that the department under this Government was doing anything else but surreptitiously pursuing those options to strip local services until about three weeks ago. I suggest that the Minister produces the ministerial directive supporting—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mickel): Order! Is the member seeking leave to table something?

Miss SIMPSON: I table the document. I said that. I did not dream these things up. They are in the document. I call on the Minister to guarantee that these hospitals will not be closed, downgraded or run into the ground by stealthily removing services and resources.

I suggest that the Minister produces the ministerial directive supporting her claims that these options were rejected last year. That the Government does not have cold feet on these unacceptable downgradings is evidenced by the reported comments of the South Burnett Health District manager, Les Stevenson, that the present Nanango Hospital building might be closed if, for instance, it did not meet Federal Government guidelines for a multipurpose hospital service with an aged care facility, as reported in the South Burnett Times of 20 July.

The only person with the power to downgrade or close Nanango Hospital or any of the other hospitals in the district is Health Minister Wendy Edmond. Multipurpose service funding from the Federal Government should only be agreed to by local communities if it is in addition to existing State funded resources. It is true that some other State Governments have used the conversion of their hospitals to multipurpose services to close hospitals by stealth. That is why I am very worried about this Labor Government trying to lull people into a false sense of security.

Time expired.
