



Speech by

Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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HOSPITALS

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (10.11 a.m.): This Government's Stalinist approach to health management is about putting patients last and threatening hospital staff with the loss of their jobs if they speak out. Following the discovery of a spy camera in a ceiling of the Toowoomba Hospital, morale in the public health sector has plummeted.

Yet another step in the systematic downgrading of public hospital facilities in Queensland was taken this week in Cairns. One quarter of Cairns Base Hospital's medical beds were axed. The closure of 27 beds of ward G-East was completely without warning, notice or discussion, according to medical staff. If these radical changes were in the best interests of the Cairns region, why were the treating physicians not consulted? Dr Clive Hadfield, of the Cairns physicians group, said that patients' lives would be put at risk by the administrative push to cut costs and that major aspects of the planned hospital redevelopment were being cut. He is one of 10 Cairns physicians who wrote to local media rejecting claims by the acting district manager that they were keeping patients in hospital for too long.

The Minister for ward closures, Wendy Edmond, declined to comment in the press on these dire community concerns and the axing of 27 beds at Cairns on the grounds that it is a local issue. That is totally unacceptable from a Brisbane-based Minister who is responsible for this. This is not a minor matter. Nor is it a minor matter that the Minister has presided over an extraordinary level of ward, theatre and clinic closures throughout this State, including at Royal Brisbane the closure of two wards, 40 outpatient specialist clinics and four intensive care beds; at Prince Charles Hospital the closure of three intensive care beds and other beds; at Toowoomba the closure of more than 20 beds; and at Nambour the closure of 36 beds.

The Health Minister should at least have the fortitude to tell the Cairns community what other cuts are planned and how far over budget the Cairns Base Hospital is. The ongoing campaign to downsize acute public health facilities in this State is more evidence for those unbelievers who still doubt the power of the Beattie Government's slash-and-burn report. The Health Strategy Advisory Project, adopted by Cabinet earlier this year, led to the establishment of a task force to find ways to—

Time expired.
