



Speech by

JEFF SEENEY

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

Hansard 9 March 1999

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (6.45 p.m.): Tonight I rise to speak in favour of the motion moved by the member to Maroochydore, which represents a very fair and responsible response to the record of this can't do Labor Government and another can't do Labor Health Minister, who in seven months have proven themselves totally incapable of running the State's health system. In that short time Queensland's most incompetent Health Minister ever has demonstrated her inability to manage the State's Health budget. Queensland's most incompetent Health Minister ever has shown a complete lack of understanding of the basics of budgeting and financial management.

The results are quickly becoming apparent, and no amount of repetition tonight can dull this Minister's shocking litany of failure—Redcliffe Hospital, \$2m over budget; Nambour Hospital, \$2.5m over budget; Bundaberg Hospital, \$1m over budget; Prince Charles Hospital, \$1.8m over budget; Caboolture Hospital, \$2m over budget; and the Toowoomba Hospital, an incredible \$7m over budget. These figures indicate mismanagement and incompetence of mammoth proportions. That mismanagement and incompetence strikes at one of the most basic human rights of every Queenslanders—the right to adequate health care.

The tragedy of this mismanagement and incompetence is that it strikes at individuals. It strikes at all of us, and it does so when we are most vulnerable. When people need and deserve health care, they find that the millions of dollars in budget overruns that the Minister talks about in this place translate into real pain and suffering for them as individuals. Unnecessary pain, needless suffering and unfair inconvenience along with a lack of treatment and lack of services are becoming all too common in Queensland's health system, and many examples have been given in the House today. There are many examples that affect real people in my electorate—real people with a real need for health services, not meaningless statistics to be manipulated for the latest press release from the Minister's office.

The health debacle affects people in larger regional hospitals, in larger regional communities and in small rural communities. It affects people everywhere. However, it is in the small communities that the lack of services caused by this Minister's sheer incompetence in financial management is, in my opinion, most cruel. The Monto Respite Centre is one of the many real examples—one of the many cruel examples.

An application for recurrent funding from the Monto Blue Nursing Service to establish centre-based respite care has this week been rejected by the Minister and her department. An application for just \$60,000 in recurrent funding for a badly needed service in a community that has done more than most to help itself has been rejected by the Health Minister because of a lack of funds—funds that obviously have been needed to prop up failing budgets and to provide rescue packages for a health system failing due to mismanagement. It is the Minister's incompetence that has led directly to the underfunding of these services across the State. It is these ancillary services that are the easiest to cut back in the short term as a panic-stricken Minister struggles desperately to contain the ever-increasing budget blow-outs. It is worth looking at the example of the Monto Respite Centre, because it illustrates the effects of the budget blow-outs on real people—the people who are trying to deliver services and the people who desperately need those services.

The Monto Blue Nursing Service brought together groups across the community—carer support groups and disability support groups—and in a remarkable display of community cooperation they

raised funds, obtained a suitable building and arranged to outfit it for respite care. What they have been so cruelly denied by the Health Minister at the last minute is the necessary recurrent funding to make the service a reality.

In Monto, like in so many other communities, respite care is desperately needed for the frail aged, for the younger people with disabilities and especially for the carers. At present in Monto, hospital beds and the local shire hall are being used for short periods for respite care for some patients. The volunteers who make up the Monto Blue Nursing Hospital Committee and, more especially, the people they are trying to help are the real victims of the Health Minister's woeful lack of financial management. These vulnerable people are the real losers from the horrific budget blow-outs which have become all too apparent after only seven months of Labor administration.

Elective surgery waiting lists Statewide are similarly unacceptable. Up to 25% of patients are now waiting more than ninety days for Category 2 surgery. This has more than doubled since last June, when the worst Health Minister in Queensland's history began her maladministration of our health system. The answer to this debacle is in the proper financial management and proper submission of budget expenditure.

Time expired.
