



Speech by

Mrs J. SHELDON

MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA

Hansard 9 March 1999

QUEENSLAND HEALTH

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—LP) (10.24 a.m.): It has come to my attention that certain employees of Queensland Health are being threatened and intimidated by being told that they are not to discuss any issues pertaining to public health with their elected representatives. This overbearing practice is particularly prevalent on the Sunshine Coast.

It has got to the stage where health workers employed in our hospitals and in the community, regardless of their professional standard, are fearful of losing their jobs if they seek to speak to their member of Parliament regarding legitimate concerns they have regarding the provision of adequate health services, the provision of adequate infrastructure and the timeliness of service provision. Evidently, the Health Minister, Wendy Edmond, has issued a directive to her regional managers that, should any employees exercise their democratic right and speak to their elected representatives, they face losing their job. I was unaware until recently that we were living in what can only be described as a Nazi State.

When I have questioned this overriding practice I have been referred to the code of conduct for Queensland Health effective 11 November 1998. I have perused this document in detail and it would be drawing a very longbow to suggest that any of the principles outlined therein would support this action. I understand union officials and their membership in public health are similarly being threatened and intimidated, and I refer to the Sunshine Coast District Health Service report of January 1999 signed by Philip Cleaton, District Manager, on 4 February 1999, in which he says that he has ensured that the newly released code of conduct is understood clearly by AWU members.

This code is in line with the Public Sector Ethics Act of 1993. It is not intended to be used as an instrument of intimidation. Perusing the contents, I find that there is no mention of restrictive access to members of Parliament, although at page 8, under principle 3 Integrity, item 7 states that—

"Employees should observe official protocols when communicating with members of Parliament."

I ask the Minister: what is an official protocol? Does that mean that one does not go and see a member of Parliament?

I also draw attention to page 7 under principle 3 Integrity, item 3, which says—

"When disclosing official information employees must ensure lawful authority."

Is this an item which may be used to control employees?

Time expired.
