



Speech by

Mrs J. SHELDON

MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA

Hansard 9 March 1999

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—LP) (6.10 p.m.): I rise to second the motion moved by the member for Maroochydore. Queensland Health is in total disarray. In 1993 the health crisis was described in the Queensland Parliament as a ship without a rudder going from crisis to crisis under a Labor Government. Now, some six years later, we are facing the same situation with yet another Labor Government.

Queenslanders are having to suffer the trauma of an endless series of Labor health plans and a Minister incapable of running the State's health system. In previous years under a Labor Government we saw a system that strangled true health care delivery with failed plans that started the bed and theatre closures whilst waiting lists were growing and growing. Discontent amongst staff grew to disturbing levels. Today under the Beattie Government we are reliving this nightmare.

The question needs to be asked: what is the state of Queensland Health today? Well, it appears that the Minister cannot manage the Health budget. From her answers this morning, she obviously does not know. Toowoomba, Nambour, Redcliffe, Caboolture, Prince Charles and Bundaberg Hospitals all have massive budget blow-outs. The Government was forced to rescue Bundaberg Hospital with a \$1m cash grab redirected from other areas of the Health budget. This is just one example of fundamental mismanagement in Queensland Health.

Will the mismanagement of our hospital system create a domino effect? Let us have a look at some other instances of poor actions that have been forced upon Queenslanders. There has been the termination of contracts with private facilities, leaving patients to join already unbearably long waiting lists. If the budget blows out this Minister will just close it down.

We have recently seen the closure of the drug and alcohol unit at the Toowoomba Base Hospital. This unit offered detoxification and rehabilitation services to Government agencies and the general public since 1982. Where to now for those who so desperately need its services? Toowoomba Hospital has a budget blow-out of more than \$7m. The Government's reaction to this situation was to restructure, which is just another fancy name under this Government for the sacking or redeployment of key staff. Where are the Labor members standing up and speaking about this? Where are the union people? Where are you, Jim Fouras?

The Minister is using the staff as scapegoats for her lack of control. Does she believe the same of Toowoomba Hospital as she stated today in this House about the situation at Nambour General Hospital—that she leaves the operational matters to the people who are paid to manage hospitals? It would seem not.

But it is not just Toowoomba Hospital that is in crisis. Nambour Hospital is \$2.5m over budget. Should its staff and the public fear restructure? Redcliffe Hospital is \$2m over budget. Should its staff and the public fear loss of vital front-line services? Caboolture Hospital is \$2m over budget. Prince Charles Hospital is \$1.8m over budget. Bundaberg Hospital is \$1m over budget. It seems that the list is never ending. Once again we are seeing a Labor Government that is not capable of running the health system in this State. There is gross incompetence—or as those opposite call it "budgetary problems"—evident at every corner turned.

An issue that particularly concerns me is the Caloundra Hospital redevelopment scheme. This scheme has now been on the boards for a number of years. It was contained in two coalition Budgets. It has still not been delivered by this Minister. At the moment "they are grading roads". That is as far as

it has gone. I would like to quote from the manager's report to the Sunshine Coast District Health Services. He reported that work would be commencing very shortly. That has been said for the past two years. He reported—

"Whilst the project planning is advanced the project has been estimated to be considerably over budget. A meeting was held at Capital Works and Asset Management Branch on 12 January 1999 and as a result of this meeting a revised plan was developed which maintains the integrity of all services."

I spoke to the previous Minister about the delays that were occurring at Caloundra Hospital. The management services branch that was looking after the plans kept changing the plans. In the Budget we had \$14.8m. The plans were signed, sealed and delivered. We are talking about last May. The plans are still being revised and we still have nothing happening at the hospital. Meanwhile, I know that the \$14.8m has been used by this Minister to prop up other capital works in other hospitals—most probably in Labor electorates. I notice the Minister nods. The Minister actually nodded; she agreed with my statement. That will go down very well on the Sunshine Coast.

What we are seeing here is deliberate delaying tactics so that the Minister does not have to use that capital works money. This was money that was previously allocated by the coalition Government. There is no doubt that the Caloundra Hospital redevelopment is yet to proceed.

Time expired.
