



Speech by

Mrs J. GAMIN

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

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HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Mrs GAMIN (Burleigh—NPA) (6.35 p.m.): This morning in this place I asked the Health Minister to explain why a young mother and her husband were forced to suffer a five-hour wait for a medical specialist at the Royal Women's Hospital, an enduring and lengthy wait while the poor young woman was suffering immense pain and blood loss. In the husband's words, the treatment was—

"... five hours of what I can only describe as cruel and inhumane."

In an effort to explain the unnecessary delay, the woman and her husband were informed by hospital staff that the five-hour wait was due to, and once again I use the husband's words—

"A lack of staff because the administration had increased in number and departments were fighting for operating rooms while the powers that be were sacking the doctors and nurses."

Instead of the Minister apologising for yet another case of the Beattie Government's gross mismanagement of the health system, the Minister displayed the ultimate lack of compassion and elected to discredit a patient. The Health Minister slandered a patient to justify the unnecessary delays and to cover up the incompetent management of the health system.

The Health Minister's performance was appalling and unethical. The ease with which the Health Minister displayed a total lack of compassion and indulged in unethical behaviour displays, once again, that the Premier has no control over his Ministers nor the standards that they employ. The Health Minister's performance was disgraceful and it reflects the sham that the Beattie Government has become. I can only hope that the Minister has dashed off a sincere statement of apology, begging forgiveness for her lack of sound judgment and her substandard method of operation.

That poor woman and her husband have had to endure not only a traumatic and tragic event. The loss of a baby after 18 weeks of excited anticipation of a healthy birth and a long life together as a family is one of the most traumatic experiences that anyone can endure. My heart goes out to them. I know that my fellow members of Parliament who have a sense of compassion will join me in commiserating with the husband and wife and, similarly, with the Gold Coast patient who the Health Minister found it necessary to denigrate. I am very sorry that that patient's plight was not given the courtesy and privacy that a patient in a Queensland hospital should expect.

I must admit that I was surprised to hear the Health Minister's outburst this morning, for I recall only too well her infamous memo to her Labor caucus colleagues that encouraged State Labor members to look out for waiting list victims who could be used politically against the former successful Health Minister, Mike Horan. I recall the slogan, "a victim a day keeps Horan at bay". Sadly, we now look at the unfortunate way in which the current Health Minister treats the true victims of the current health system.

Referring again to the incident that occurred at the Royal Women's Hospital, the problem is not with the nurses and doctors; it is clearly the responsibility—or should I say the irresponsibility—of the management of the hospital and the health system. Since 1938, the Royal Women's Hospital has provided a tremendous service to Queensland women and their families. The women's hospital is a highly regarded facility. Over the past 60 years it has been staffed and managed by some of our most respected nurses and doctors. Some 455,000 Queenslanders have been born at the hospital since it opened. I feel confident that the mothers and fathers of those 455,000 Queenslanders would be more

than pleased with the treatment that they received as, indeed, I was myself when I had my first baby there almost 40 years ago.

However, when management cuts the budget to restrict staff numbers, sadly we witness tragedies such as I outlined earlier. Hopefully, those tragic circumstances, in conjunction with the current redevelopment of the Royal Women's Hospital, will provide us with the opportunity to significantly improve facilities at the hospital. This major upgrade will give staff the tools they need to continue providing first-class care into the next century.

However, I remind the Health Minister that hospitals are not about just buildings and equipment. The lifeblood of any hospital is the staff—the nurses and doctors—who provide care to patients every day of every year. For the Health Minister's benefit, I point out that it is her job to ensure that the correct staffing levels are employed at the Royal Women's Hospital and at every other public hospital under her jurisdiction.

Unfortunately, as we have witnessed many times previously, a Labor Government cannot manage and, whether we are talking about a health system or a financial system, it makes a mess of the operation. The coalition Government was committed to giving Queenslanders a health system that they wanted and deserved no matter where they lived. The coalition Government delivered on a range of health services throughout the State, which overcame the six years of mismanagement and procrastination under a Labor Government. The coalition's goal in health was to get it back to basics——

Time expired.
