



Speech by

Mr L. SPRINGBORG

MEMBER FOR WARWICK

Hansard 26 August 1999

HEALTH SERVICE

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.45 p.m.): I rise to support the censure motion moved against this Government, condemning it for its dreadful mishandling of the health system in Queensland. I have never heard such a lot of drivel and seen so much duckshoving in all of my life. We have seen a bunch of Government backbenchers sent in here, and they have popped up like cannon fodder. It is quite obvious that they have had little capacity, if any, for individual thought and research.

What we have heard from Government members in the past few days indicates quite clearly that there has been a secret agenda—not conceded by the honourable member for Chermside, but it is going to jump up and bite him one day—to privatise many of the services provided by Queensland Health in this State, together with a range of other cutbacks, which have been secretly hidden and covered up but are planned for right throughout Queensland.

I take this opportunity to praise the former Minister for Health, Mike Horan, for the excellent job that he did in the time that he was Minister from 1996 to 1998. He travelled through my electorate on numerous occasions and had a wonderful understanding—an individual understanding—of the health services which were available in many centres right throughout Queensland. He visited hospitals individually, one by one. And such was his understanding that, two or three years later, he was able to relate the intricate details of the operating theatre, the birthing unit and the catering facilities within that hospital.

A couple of the issues that he addressed in very short order in my electorate included the refurbishment of The Oaks nursing home. Through the Borbidge Government, he provided \$1m for that particular facility. Also, the new community health care facility in Stanthorpe, which was badly needed, was established in a very short time. The capital works program was brought forward to address that outstanding need. It is a great pity that this Government seems to be incapable of doing the same.

The honourable member for Toowoomba South mentioned benchmarking and all that sort of thing. I say to Government members: try telling somebody who is lying on a bed, waiting for an operation, that it is okay, because they are being benchmarked with the Labor Party benchmarks. That will be very, very cold comfort for them. One thing that I have noticed recently is that, when I ring up to speak to somebody in this Government, I cannot find them because they are out networking with focus groups. This Government is not interested in community health facilities. It is not interested in providing basic health services. It is more interested in going out there with glossy brochures and cover-ups.

Tonight I call upon the Health Minister to provide an assurance to the people of Warwick that The Oaks nursing home—which is a wonderful facility and for which, as I mentioned a moment ago, \$1m was provided for refurbishment under the Borbidge/Sheldon Government—is going to continue to remain as a State-owned and run facility. Those people there are very concerned about this secret Cabinet document, which the Premier only yesterday—

Mrs Edmond interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Did the Health Minister read the newspapers this morning? I suppose she turned straight to the comics. The newspapers this morning indicated quite clearly that the Premier's office had considered that at least half of those things which were uncovered earlier in the week by the

Opposition were actually going to be implemented. That was denied by the Premier only a day or so ago in this place. What did he do on Tuesday? He said, "We have found \$200m." That was a \$200m diversion. We had the concession by his office yesterday—carried in today's newspaper—that yes, they are looking at issues such as privatisation of aged care facilities; but no, it might not go to Cabinet. If it was not for the actions of this Opposition in coming into this place and pressuring the Government, those things would have eventuated and we would have had the sell-off and the privatisation or whatever the Minister wants to call it.

I am calling on this Health Minister and this Government to make sure that the people in my electorate—the residents of The Oaks nursing home at the Warwick Hospital—are not put through any trauma; that the assurances and guarantees are given that there will be no privatisation of that facility. They are worried, their families are worried, and the families of the staff at that particular facility are worried.

Mrs Edmond interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: The Minister should stop waving around documents and start running her department. She should get out there and start providing some assurances to those people who are genuinely concerned about her dreadful mishandling of the Health portfolio in this State. They want to see fundamental, deliverable health services. But that is something which they are not seeing under the Beattie Labor Government in this State.
