



Speech by

**LINDA LAVARCH**

**STATE MEMBER FOR KURWONGBAH**

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Hansard 9 March 1999

### HEALTH PORTFOLIO

**Mrs LAVARCH** (Kurwongbah—ALP) (6.30 p.m.): I am pleased to support the amendment moved by the Minister for Health. If members opposite truly cared about the health of Queensland citizens and if they truly cared about our hospitals, they would not be playing personality politics; they would be getting behind our push for a better health funding deal from the Commonwealth Government, which is formed by members from their own side of politics. If the member for Maroochydore wants to do something constructive, she should speak to her Federal colleagues. If members opposite truly cared and if they wanted to do something constructive—if they were not just in it for the short-term political gain, to get a 15-second grab on TV to get better known—they would pressure their Federal colleagues to ensure that Queensland is not short-changed \$465m by the Commonwealth Government. They would join forces with us on behalf of all Queenslanders.

If members opposite were of a view—as they should be—to join forces with us and lobby their Federal colleagues, that would give our prospects a little bit more oomph than when they were in Government. One of the most appalling things that happened when those opposite were in Government was their response when the Commonwealth withdrew the dental health program. At that time, the member for Maroochydore said—

"I regret to say that the Commonwealth dental health program will continue only until 31 December 1996.

...

I am very disappointed that the Federal Government has pulled the money out of that particular program."

The shadow Minister for Health should have been outraged, but all she said was, "I am disappointed."

**Miss Simpson** interjected.

**Mrs LAVARCH:** Yes, the previous Government did continue it, but at what cost? What service is there for our dental patients? The waiting list to get an appointment for a check-up blew out to 27 months.

**Mr Sullivan:** They had a waiting list for the waiting list.

**Mrs LAVARCH:** Yes, they did have a waiting list for the waiting list. Then the honourable member buried her head and would not address the issue. All she would say was that the former Government kept the service going, but I am afraid that it could not be called a service.

I wanted to make a positive and constructive contribution to the debate tonight. I am pleased to say that, in spite of increased pressure, the Government can justly be proud of its record in health generally and in mental health particularly. I will focus on mental health for a very good and simple reason: one in five Queenslanders will experience a mental illness or serious mental health problem at least once in his or her life. This startling statistic makes it imperative that we provide high quality mental health services and facilities throughout Queensland, otherwise there is the capacity for mental illness to impose a significant burden on the health system. Recognising the importance of this situation, in its very first Budget the Government injected a record \$29m into mental health. That massive increase will

allow the State Labor Government to expand and upgrade services in community and hospital settings, particularly in regional and rural areas, mobile intensive treatment, child and youth services and services targeting indigenous people. It also provides for the implementation of the second national mental health plan in communities throughout the State.

This represents a significant and fundamental difference from the position of the members opposite, who would rather see mental health kept in the background and service consumers who are locked away, literally and figuratively. The proof is in the words and actions of members opposite. While claiming a shortage of mental health beds, the Opposition is holding up the development of new supported mental health accommodation. In particular, I point to the appalling behaviour of the member for Mooloolah, who is trying to obstruct the provision of appropriate community-based mental health services on the Sunshine Coast. I am advised that, despite numerous briefings, the member for Mooloolah has been actively agitating against the development of the community care unit for long-term mental health consumers in his electorate. Shame on the member for Mooloolah! This is despite the fact that the people involved——

Time expired.

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