



Speech by

**LINDA LAVARCH**

**STATE MEMBER FOR KURWONGBAH**

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### QUEENSLAND HEALTH

**Mrs LAVARCH** (Kurwongbah—ALP) (6.39 p.m.): Tonight I am delighted to participate in this debate. As a member of the Labor Party, I can hold my head high when it comes to health services. The Labor Party has a proud tradition of providing quality public health services to the people of Queensland, and this continues under the Beattie Labor Government.

In speaking against the motion and for the amendment, I am glad that I am on this side of the House and the debate. The coalition's record on health matters is nothing other than shameful. I cannot believe the audacity of members opposite in seeking to criticise this Government's commitment to providing the highest possible level of health care to all Queenslanders. It is a sad reflection, given the hypocrisy of the Opposition in this vital area. The members opposite do not know how to and cannot formulate policy, let alone implement it. The opposite side of the House is the original policy-free zone. I would say "vacuum", but that implies a capacity to take things in. Instead they are reduced to repeating by rote articles and lines from the Courier-Mail. The speech tonight from the member for Maroochydore was a shameful repetition of what was in the Courier-Mail today. The efforts of the member for Toowoomba South as the Minister for Health were woeful and his efforts in tonight's debate were even more woeful. He should hang his head in shame.

Tonight it is with great pleasure that I will demonstrate the difference between the Beattie Labor Government's achievements in the Health portfolio and those of the previous coalition Government. Members opposite may have had "Headlines Horan", which is all he was good for in Health, but this Government has a Health Minister of substance and vision. For that reason alone, Queenslanders can rest assured that the State's health system is in good, safe hands. To make sure that the point is not lost and because our achievements are so numerous, tonight I wish to concentrate on the area of mental health services—services which are vital in my community.

I am glad to see that the member for Caboolture is present in the House tonight, because his electorate of Caboolture, together with the electorate of the honourable member for Kallangur and my electorate of Kurwongbah, share many health services. For the benefit of the member for Caboolture, I will outline just a few of this Government's accomplishments in his electorate so that he does not become an embarrassment to his electorate and party—that is, if he still has one—or be seen as a whining, whingeing lackey of the Opposition. We have only to look at the performance of the member for Caboolture during question time to know that Opposition members have him wrapped so tightly around their little finger that when they say, "Jump", he asks, "How high?"

If the member for Caboolture wants to know what a real advocate is he could do no better than look to his predecessor, Jon Sullivan, who was a tireless supporter of the Caboolture Hospital and a veritable thorn in the side of the member for Toowoomba South. Today I searched the library database for the words "Jon Sullivan, the member for Caboolture" and the "Caboolture Hospital". Can honourable members guess how many pages that search produced? A search between 1996 and 1998 produced 44 pages. He had to fight the former Minister for Health, the member for Toowoomba South, just to get a decent deal for the Caboolture Hospital. The former member for Caboolture is worth quoting tonight. He stated—

"History will show that, as Opposition Health spokesman, the Minister"—  
that is, Mike Horan—

"was the most vile, vicious and opportunistic ambulance chaser that this State has ever seen."

Who can disagree with that?

The 1998-99 Budget saw a \$29m increase in funding for mental health services in Queensland to an impressive \$272m. This is a 16% overall increase on top of the recurrent budget brought down by the coalition in May 1998. Earlier this year in Maryborough the new mental health service in-patient unit was opened by the Minister. It consists of seven general beds, four high-dependency beds and a special care room, two psychogeriatric rooms, an outpatient treatment wing and a day accommodation/activity area. In addition, \$442,230 was injected into community and mental health services. On the Gold Coast there has also been an increase in services. The new private hospital at Robina will provide 59 public adult mental health beds and a total of 11 child and youth mental health beds and 10 adult acute beds.

Time expired.

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