



Speech by

**Mr M. HORAN**

**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH**

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Hansard 9 March 1999

#### HEALTH PORTFOLIO

**Mr HORAN** (Toowoomba South—NPA) (6.25 p.m.): What a tragedy it has been for Queensland to be hit again with a Labor Government in charge of the hospitals of this State. We all have to ask the question: where has all the money gone? We saw this happen before under the Goss administration and we are seeing it again now: \$103.5m of sign-on money obtained under the Medicare agreement—one-off, up-front, sign-on money obtained through the Medicare agreement on top of the huge rise that was negotiated in the ordinary year-to-year funding over the five-year term of the agreement. Where has that money gone? All we see are hospitals with budget crises. Where has the money gone? Has it gone into the hospitals? Has it gone into elective surgery?

In terms of elective surgery, all we have seen is a massive blow-out. After two years of hard work by the staff in organising Surgery on Time—the doctors, the nurses, the technical and support staff—to get the semi-urgent wait times down to around 10% across the State, that wait time has now doubled—blown out—to just on 20%. What an absolute tragedy for this State!

During this debate, I have heard Labor members interject asking, "Where are you going to get the money for all of this?" Everyone wants more money for health. What did the members opposite do with the money? We received the biggest Medicare increase ever seen in history—a \$1.35 billion increase over five years and we got \$103.5m of the \$120m sign-on money that was available across Australia. We in Queensland got the lion's share. What has happened to all that money? Where on earth has the money gone? That is the question that should be asked in this Parliament as we see hospital after hospital in financial crisis.

We see the situation in the Toowoomba Hospital of the \$7m budget overrun. However, what about the Royal Brisbane Hospital, which has double the budget of Toowoomba Hospital but also has double the budget overrun—a \$14m budget overrun? Are there going to be any scapegoats in the Premier's electorate? Is the district manager going to get the sack, along with the medical super and the director of nursing? Or is it just because Toowoomba happens to be a regional town and Labor thinks that it can do it that way?

**Mr Sullivan:** You know what you did.

**Mr HORAN:** The member represents an electorate on the north side of Brisbane. What does he think about the situation at the Royal Brisbane Hospital—a \$14m budget overrun? The Government will do nothing about that. It will probably bail out the hospital like it bailed out the Bundaberg Hospital because it happened to be in a Labor electorate.

Today, we have heard plenty about some of these overruns: Nambour Hospital, \$2.5m and 36 beds at the Nambour Hospital still closed; Prince Charles Hospital, \$1.8m; Bundaberg Hospital, \$1m; Toowoomba Hospital, \$7m; the Royal Brisbane Hospital, \$14m; and Redcliffe and Caboolture Hospitals, \$2m. I ask the question—and I am going to do so over and over again tonight—where has all the money gone? What on earth has the Government done with the money? Certainly, it is not spending it on the hospitals, which are at the front line of service.

The Government is certainly not looking after the elderly people. Tonight we have heard some stories about not being able to get a mental health bed. In terms of mental health, the coalition Government put in place a system of emergency beds that would be available so that that problem could not occur. We put it in place in conjunction with the various psychiatrist and psychologist groups.

At the moment, a Treasury razor gang is going through Health, but there are all of these unfunded promises that Labor made during the last election campaign. When the coalition came to power, it had to fix up the capital works budget when it found a \$1.2 billion shortage. When Premier Beattie was the Health Minister, in one of the most scurrilous campaigns I have ever seen he travelled throughout the State of Queensland going to hospital after hospital saying, "We will build you an \$80m hospital", when he knew that there was only \$40m in the budget. He did that in the week after the Mundingburra by-election. It was one of the most scurrilous campaigns that this State has ever seen. I will never forget the low-grade hypocrisy of that particular campaign.

Tonight there is going to be a real test for the member for Nicklin. Before he slithers across the carpet, he ought to think about whether he stands for the people of his electorate. What about the 36 beds of the hospital in his electorate? What about the staff of that hospital? What about the budget overrun of that hospital? Now is the time for the member to stand up—to be a bit proactive on behalf of his own hospital and not be a captive of the Labor Government who used him when it wanted to. What do we see? Is there going to be a bailout for the Nambour Hospital like there was a bailout for the Bundaberg Hospital? I bet there will not be.

If there is one thing that we have to concentrate on in this debate tonight, it is that once again we are seeing a Labor Government squandering precious health money. This Labor Government was left with a department that was absolutely awash with money after the Medicare agreements, with the sign-on money and the recurrent increase over five years. What on earth is happening in Queensland to all the money that was left in the Health Department?

Time expired.

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