



Speech by

Mr M. HORAN

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

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TOOWOOMBA GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (11 p.m.): This week we have seen the exposure of the corruption and sleaze surrounding the net bet affair. Tonight I wish to speak about one of the most disgraceful cutbacks I have ever seen. The Beattie Government is making cutbacks at the Toowoomba Hospital, starting with, of all things, a cutback to palliative care.

The Toowoomba Hospital has one of the most wonderful palliative care sections imaginable. Its staff are totally dedicated. This is an essential area in any modern hospital, enabling those who are dying slowly to have their family with them and receive specialised palliative care. At our hospital, palliative care is being reduced to only four beds. Worse still, those beds will be amalgamated with the medical ward, which is itself being reduced from 32 beds to 24 beds. Virtually every day of the week that ward treats some 27 or 28 patients. It is hard to believe that a Government could be so callous as to make cutbacks aimed at the dying and their families. But that is probably typical of this Government, which has lost the plot. It has its eye very firmly on what it can do for its Labor mates and is forgetting about the most vulnerable in our community.

In addition, the surgical ward has been cut by some six beds. The maternity ward has already been cut by six beds. The alcohol and drug unit, which treats another vulnerable group, will close for a month over Christmas. There will be no outpatient services over that period. That unit is going through another external review. Would honourable members believe that dialysis services within the hospital will be capped? There will be a waiting list for dialysis services within the hospital. However, there will be home dialysis wherever that is feasible.

Let us turn to some other areas of the hospital. In relation to speech therapy services, there are 70 children on the waiting list, some of whom have been waiting since December last year. We all know how essential speech therapy is for kids. If they do not get the chance to have their speech impediments fixed at an early age, they face learning difficulties, they are placed at a disadvantage socially and they do not get the start in life that they deserve. For physiotherapy services there is a waiting list of 120 people, some of whom have been waiting since the beginning of the year.

The tragedy of the waiting lists is that the direction from Queensland Health is that no-one is to be advised about these cuts. The staff want to write to people to explain the waiting lists and how long they have to wait—just normal communication. They are being banned from communicating with people. The dreadful disciplinary regime being imposed on the hospital is akin to that in Russia. The staff are not game to speak to anybody else. They are being threatened with disciplinary action and the sack. The Government has turned the Toowoomba Hospital into a place of fear instead of a place of love and compassion—something it has always been.

The Toowoomba General Hospital serves a region containing around 200,000 people. There are 100,000 people in Toowoomba, and the remainder come from all of the surrounding districts in the south-west of Queensland. The staff are absolutely fantastic and the work they have done over many years is appreciated. However, there is low morale at the hospital as the Labor Government moves in with its tentacles.

The physiotherapy visits to intensive care have been cut by 33%. What do we see when we look around? We see the Labor Government looking after its mates. The Government is aiming to cut 100 jobs. Young nurses in casual employment will lose their jobs. These are young people who are probably

married and are trying to pay off their house or car. They are in great fear of losing their jobs. One hundred jobs will go. This is the Government that talks about jobs, jobs, jobs. That is probably \$5m worth of wages gone from our city, which has contributed so much to Queensland.

Just last week the Government commenced its plan to move out 90 seriously intellectually and physically disabled people from the Baillie Henderson Hospital. These are some of the most vulnerable people in the State. For decades they have received wonderful care. A few months ago, the 14 men at the Mount Lofty Nursing Home, who had been there for 30 or 40 years, were moved away. The only family they ever knew were the caring staff at the Mount Lofty Nursing Home who looked after them. That is the sort of callous Government we have. It is preoccupied with putting Labor mates in positions of influence and giving them the rails run when it comes to business opportunities such as Gocorp. That is an absolute disgrace. Whom is it attacking? It is attacking the dying, the sick, the aged and the disabled.

Time expired.
