



Speech by

Mr M. HORAN

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

Hansard 26 August 1999

HEALTH SERVICES

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (6.34 p.m.): As I follow the member for data collection and benchmarking in this debate, I think I should tell the House what is really happening in Queensland Health.

It is quite obvious to people who have a bit of experience in this area that the extra \$1.3 billion negotiated by the previous Government is simply not going into Health. So where is it going? This portfolio is obviously short of money. The Government has made unfunded promises and it is making cutbacks to try to cover up the fact that the money has been snatched by Treasury and taken elsewhere. The censure motion moved against this Government relates firstly to the cover-up.

What have we seen this week? We have seen a Premier whose credibility is declining rapidly. We have heard that the system is not for sale. We have heard that the Cabinet submission was noted, then endorsed, then rejected and then was up for discussion. Then we heard that some of the recommendations have been implemented. Then the Premier and his Health Minister had to admit that they had actually signed the submission. Today the truth has come out. They have signed off, endorsed and approved more than 26 recommendations that will have drastic consequences for many Queenslanders.

I refer to a list of some of the things that have been done or are about to be done relative to some of those 26 recommendations. The capital works team has been established. The cease or redirect report on priority sites of the capital works program was completed on 1 August. The report on the remaining sites is to be finished by 1 October. At the Royal Brisbane Hospital, 40 outpatient specialist clinics are to close. At least two operating theatres are to close. Two wards are to close. A further 200 beds in West Block are under threat of downsizing.

At the Prince Charles Hospital, one intensive care unit, two wards and 20 interim care beds are to close. Food services are to be outsourced. The community mental health service is to be stopped and 13 nurses are to be sacked. At Eventide Sandgate, another 20 beds are to close. The Ashworth House nursing home is to be sold to a private organisation.

At the Nambour Hospital, 36 beds are to be closed and sent to the new Noosa Hospital and two operating theatres are to close. The new hospital at Maryborough is in jeopardy. It should have been started 12 months ago. The outpatients clinic at the Bundaberg Hospital is to close. Public beds at the Gladstone Hospital are to be closed. At the Cairns Hospital, the 32-bed medical ward and the 19-bed gynaecology ward are to close.

The Gordonvale Hospital is at risk of closure. There is a threatened closure of the outpatients clinic at the Warwick Hospital. The Malanda Hospital is to close. The Forsyth Hospital, which is only small but very valuable to people in the bush, is to close. The Nanango Hospital is to close and become a drug and alcohol and multipurpose service. The Murgon Hospital is to close and to become a palliative care centre and first aid post. The Wondai Hospital is to close and become a palliative care facility. The Gin Gin Hospital is under threat, as is the Sarina Hospital. At Toowoomba, palliative care is to be cut from nine beds to four.

Mrs EDMOND: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. This must be the list of what the member for Toowoomba South was going to do, because it is totally untrue. He is misleading the House. It is offensive and he should withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr HORAN: The medical ward at Toowoomba will be reduced from 32 to 24 beds and include palliative care. People will now die behind curtains in their beds, not in special rooms. Surgical will be reduced by six beds and maternity will be reduced by six beds. Physiotherapy to intensive care is to be reduced. There are 120 people on the waiting list for physiotherapy; there are 70 people on the waiting list for speech therapy and the drug and alcohol unit is again being reviewed.

After all the deception we have had over the past few days, the truth is coming out. This Cabinet submission was signed by the Premier, by the then Treasurer and by the Health Minister. Some aspects of the recommendations are already being implemented or are proposed to be implemented. Only the vigilance of the Opposition and, I hope, some members whose electorates are threatened with the loss of services will put a stop to this economic rationalism and madness.

The Government wants to bring back the bureaucracy—three zonal managers in control of a purchaser/provider system. Mr Beattie wanted it when he was Health Minister, when he did his 100 days of looking around. He wanted three big bureaucracies as well as the Health Department itself.

What does the recommendation to "shift the responsibility for residential aged care provision from the balance sheet" mean? It means get rid of them! Sell them off! These recommendations affect the most vulnerable people. State nursing homes have looked after people who could not get beds elsewhere. I speak of the Eventides in Brisbane, Rockhampton and Charters Towers. It is a disgrace. Government members are all sitting there like dummies not taking any notice. This week the Government has been exposed. We have exposed the Premier for his lack of credibility. We have exposed the Beattie Government for what it is going to do to Health.

Time expired.
