



Speech by

Mr M. VEIVERS

MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

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QUEENSLAND HEALTH

Mr VEIVERS (Southport—NPA) (6.34 p.m.): The latest allegations and counter allegations about the privatisation of the State's public hospital system are more evidence that this Government has totally lost its way so far as health care is concerned. To put it simply, it does not know and obviously does not care about the health of Queenslanders, which includes the many hundreds of people in my electorate of Southport where, I might remind the Government, the Gold Coast Hospital is located.

Loud and eloquent promises have been made by the Health Minister and the Government that funding to the Gold Coast Hospital would be increased. Nothing of the kind has happened. The things we open down there—

Mrs EDMOND: I rise to a point of order. Funding for the Gold Coast Hospital was increased by \$2.5m in August last year and \$750,000 in January this year. Can I say—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Minister will resume her seat. I call the member for Southport.

Mr VEIVERS: "The member for Southport", if you cannot remember. I say to the Health Minister: nothing of the kind has happened. The member for Toowoomba South—

Government members interjected.

Mr VEIVERS: He did not know where I came from.

Mr SPEAKER: Yes, I did.

Mr VEIVERS: Excuse me—I'd like to run the House for a while.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Speaker did call "the member for Southport". I do know where the member comes from. I do know the title of his electorate.

Mr VEIVERS: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The member for Toowoomba South covered the lies that the Premier tried to push across the Chamber just before. He covered them very eloquently and came up with facts. The Gold Coast Hospital has been given only a pittance. It is a very sad fact that this important hospital, which serves a rapidly growing population, cannot even keep up basic services for the people who depend on it. The Minister says that she has increased funding and done all of these good things. I can tell her that she should go down there and try to tell that to the people of Southport.

While I have always found the Health Minister, Wendy Edmond, to be an honest and forthright person, I believe that like the people of the Gold Coast she is the victim of what I can only describe as the bent and twisted policies of this Government towards health issues. As we all know, it would not be the first time that a Labor Government has hung one of its own out to dry. However, I am not suggesting that the Minister can be totally exonerated from the mess that our health services are in, particularly at the Gold Coast Hospital. She should have worked a darned sight harder to make sure that she was not stymied in her portfolio.

There is a sinister side to all of this, which involves the blatant misuse of funds. During its term in office—

Mrs Lavarch interjected.

Mr VEIVERS: You will have your turn in a minute, madam. You should be game enough to go down to the coast and front up to the people at the Gold Coast Hospital. Indeed, I challenge you to debate me in front of the hospital staff and patients and tell them what you are trying to say in this place.

Mr SPEAKER: The member will address the Chair.

Mrs Lavarch interjected.

Mr VEIVERS: I would be happy to see you down there. You would be tarred, feathered and shot out of the place. It is very easy in this place with the protection of the Speaker and the majority of the House behind you.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will address the Chair.

Mr VEIVERS: Out in the real world where people are hurting the member would not stand a chance. As I was saying, the Minister should work a darned sight harder.

During its term in office, the coalition negotiated a new Medicare agreement that provided more than \$1 billion in hospital funding to Queensland during the last financial year. That was an increase of more than \$65m on the previous year, which is a massive percentage increase in funding. The Beattie Labor Government was awash with hospital funds thanks to the coalition's success in striking the new Medicare agreement with the Federal Government. That extra funding should have been used to inject extra money into the Gold Coast Hospital, but it was not.

Where did all that money go? It was squirreled away to be used in Labor's heartland. Health generally and the Gold Coast Hospital in particular were the losers, and they continue to be the losers. This issue is not going to go away. Like the Internet gambling fiasco, it is going to come back again and again to haunt this Government. Sadly, though, innocent people desperately needing hospital treatment will be the ones to suffer most.

My colleague the shadow Minister for Health, Fiona Simpson, has given notice of a motion to disband the Health Department's capital works task force, which is charged with scaling back building projects. I fully endorse this call and I strongly support the rest of her motion, which calls for the restoration of outpatient services that have already been severed and that the Government guarantee that no further clinics or services will be cut.
