



Speech by

PHIL REEVES

MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD

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ELECTIVE SURGERY WAITING LISTS

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (6.20 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to second the amendment moved by the Minister for Health. We came to Government almost 18 months ago with a number of important goals in respect of improving health services for the people of Queensland. One priority was the progressive implementation of our Waiting List Reduction Strategy. That strategy has resulted in measurable improvements in the way in which public hospitals deliver surgical services to the people of Queensland. The eight-point plan to cut waiting lists for surgery has ensured an unprecedented level of transparency for hospital waiting lists and a much more efficient use of hospital infrastructure. An important element of our Waiting List Reduction Strategy is the careful monitoring of performance across all health districts. When one hospital has a backlog in a particular speciality, a neighbouring hospital may have spare capacity that can be used. For example, the spare capacity at the QE II is being used to take some of the workload off the other hospitals.

Another of our key objectives has been to build safer and more supportive communities. We strive to achieve this objective across every portfolio and our success in the Health portfolio is particularly outstanding. Our main aim in Health is to keep people healthy and out of hospitals. Members opposite, most notably the Opposition Health spokesperson, have sometimes scoffed at our efforts. How could we ever forget her faux pas on 4QR's morning program on 16 March when she attacked us for spending money on what she called "soft, social welfare areas"? We can only assume that she was attacking such activities as our Strengthening Families initiative and our school nurses program. She found out very quickly that she was out of step with the community and also with members on her side of the House who not only support these tremendous initiatives but have also been lobbying hard to have them introduced in their electorates.

The core program under our Strengthening Families initiative is the Positive Parenting Program, or PPP. Through PPP we are providing parenting programs to Queenslanders free of charge from some 30 locations across the State, including in my electorate. This includes two pilot programs being developed in indigenous communities— one remote, the other one urban—to develop models that are culturally appropriate to indigenous families. The Government is also in the process of expanding the PPP program to the bush. In the first half of next year, 60 existing community and child health nurses located in rural and remote locations will be trained and accredited in the Primary Care PPP, Group PPP and the Self-help PPP.

I have spoken to the parents involved in the programs at the Palmdale Community Health Centre in my electorate. The Minister was with me when we launched the program. The participants would not call them "soft, social welfare areas", they would call them real life programs that offer real life solutions. For example, one program addresses the sleeping routines of newborn babies. That not only greatly assists the babies but also the mothers. Once again, these programs are providing real solutions and real results.

We have allocated more than \$1.2m a year to employ 20 child behaviour specialists, including psychologists and other trained professionals, to provide intensive support for parents experiencing particularly difficult behaviour problems in their home. PPP aims to strengthen the family unit and prevent the development of a range of social, behavioural and mental health problems. Our Strengthening Families initiative supports a wide range of programs, including non-Government

initiatives. For example, more than \$40m will be invested over four years in a school-based youth nursing program. Up to 100 school-based youth health nurses will be working with secondary students in 194 State high schools and 60 high top State schools. Rochedale State High School, in my electorate, asked for this service. It got it and it is really happy with it. About half of these nurses are in place, providing much-needed assistance and advice to adolescents to help them make a safe and healthy transition to adulthood. The school nurses are an important link in our drive to prevent suicide amongst young people by picking up the early signs— isolation, withdrawal and bullying. Nurses are also alert for mental health problems, such as depression. We know that early treatment leads to better outcomes.

These are some of the facts concerning what this Government is doing. Unfortunately, members opposite do not want to know the facts. The list goes on. This Government is committed to providing safer, more supportive communities and a better quality of life for all Queenslanders. The boost we have given health services is clear proof that we are achieving those objectives, which is in contrast to the record of members opposite during the two and a half years that they were in Government.
