



Speech by

**Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE**

**MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE**

Hansard 26 August 1999

### HEALTH SERVICES

**Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE** (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (6.09 p.m.): I second the motion moved by the member for Maroochydore. I do so obviously with some concern, because what we have seen, as the honourable member has detailed to the House this week, has been a litany of lies day by day—a shifting position by a shifty Government day by day.

**Mrs EDMOND:** I rise to a point of order. How much more unparliamentary can one get?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The problem is—

**Mrs Edmond:** He was talking about lying. It's unparliamentary language. It is not acceptable. He took points of order on me last week.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The difficulty is that he did not say that the Minister was lying.

**Mrs Edmond:** No, but it's unparliamentary language, Mr Speaker.

**Mr SPEAKER:** No. There is a limit to that. I think that has been explained. There is no point of order.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** That shows us just how sensitive this abysmal, incompetent Minister for Health is. I think Queenslanders should be asking why we have a health system in crisis in this State when one of the last actions of the previous coalition Government was to negotiate a new Medicare Agreement for Queensland which will mean an extra \$1.3 billion over five years for the public hospital system. Or is that extra money not going into the Health budget?

This morning we saw an absolutely incredible contempt of Parliament on the part of the Premier. He was asked a series of questions detailing the inaccuracies and backflips during the course of this week by his Government. What sort of answer did we get from the Premier? We got: "The bottom line is this" and his other favourite, "Let me make it perfectly clear."

**Mr Johnson:** Absolutely clear.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** Absolutely clear. Then we got the "ho, ho, ho"—the pretend laughter. The fact is that during the course of this week there have been a number of contradictions by this Government that show that the man who holds the commission as Premier is not capable of being frank and open with the people of Queensland. Increasingly, Queenslanders are starting to ask themselves, "How can we believe one word of what this man says?"

On Monday he said that the "public health system, public hospital system, is not for sale; it's not for sale; it's not for sale". On Monday the Health Minister put out a statement saying that "radical" suggestions had been rejected by her and the Premier. But then we had the revelation that the Premier, the Health Minister and the stood aside Treasurer took to Cabinet and signed a Cabinet submission detailing cutbacks to health services in Queensland and detailing proposals for privatisation. On Tuesday the Premier told Parliament that "Cabinet rejected any concept of privatisation options". But then, as the member for Maroochydore said, the report in the Courier-Mail today stated—

"The State Government staged an embarrassing retreat yesterday on its claims it had rejected outright secret plans to wind back and privatise elements of the free public hospital system."

What happened? The Premier's office contradicted the Premier and the Health Minister. We were told by the Premier's office that privatisation proposals were still "on foot". The article goes on to state that Mr Beattie and the Health Minister earlier this week claimed that the proposals had been merely noted by Cabinet, but both of their offices yesterday admitted that this was not the case.

We see the revelation that over half the recommendations are in the process of being implemented. We have the new litter of bureaucratic fat cats on \$180,000 a year while this Minister and this Premier are cutting back health services across Queensland at a time when they have record funding from the Commonwealth under the new Medicare Agreement.

Day after day we have seen lie after lie from this Government. It is only when at the end of the week we find the Premier's office contradicts the Minister for Health and the Premier that the people of Queensland start to find out the truth. This Government has much to hide. This Government has made a mockery of the accountability process. This Government is reversing the very substantial achievements of the previous coalition Government in public hospital administration.

Time expired.

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