



Speech by

**Mr T. SULLIVAN**

**MEMBER FOR CHERMSIDE**

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Hansard 9 March 1999

### HEALTH PORTFOLIO

**Mr SULLIVAN** (Chermside—ALP) (6.20 p.m.): I rise to support the amendment moved by the Health Minister. We now know why the former Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the former Health Minister, failed in his leadership challenge against the Opposition Leader, Rob Borbidge. He anointed the member for Maroochydore as his number-cruncher, and it is glaringly obvious how bad she is with numbers. On radio, television and even here in the Chamber this morning, the member for Maroochydore proved just how mathematically challenged she is. She has been repeating the fallacy that only \$77m out of the \$620m allocated this year has been spent so far. She has no understanding that the \$77m to which she refers is a figure only for new contracts signed, not an actual total expenditure for the whole period—new contracts, not total expenditure.

Here are some of the facts. The appropriated expenditure for the Queensland Health capital works program this financial year, including joint State/Commonwealth programs, is \$621m. As of 31 January this year, I am advised that the actual expenditure by the Health Department on capital works is \$288m. All the indications are that we will spend all of the allocated \$620m this year.

To show where this confidence comes from, I ask members to consider the following: at the Royal Brisbane/Royal Women's redevelopment site, the budget estimate this year was an expenditure of \$53m. We are on track to spend slightly more than that figure. The Princess Alexandra Hospital rebuilding program is 12 weeks ahead of time and on budget. In my own electorate of Chermside, it was anticipated that we could spend \$42m. In fact, we will probably spend closer to \$49m this year at the Prince Charles Hospital.

I ask members to contrast that level of capital works with what happened in the past financial year under the Borbidge Government. Departmental records show that the coalition Government's budget allocation for the 1997-98 financial year was \$557m but their actual expenditure amounted to only \$475m. That leaves a massive shortfall of \$82m not spent by Opposition Leader, Rob Borbidge, and the member for Toowoomba South, Mike Horan, when they were in the positions of Premier and Health Minister. That \$82m could have been spent on improving Queensland's health facilities and giving Queenslanders jobs.

The Beattie Government's Capital Works Program spending this financial year has created about 9,000 jobs. Add to these jobs the jobs of 600 additional workers who are delivering health services as a result of the Beattie Government's health initiatives, and the people of Queensland will see what a can-do Government the Beattie Labor Government is.

It is timely also to remind members, particularly the new members opposite, that the Queensland Capital Works Program, which contains one of the largest public hospital rebuilding programs of its type in the world, was a Labor Government initiative. That initiative contrasts starkly with the coalition's record of 32 years during which it allowed the hospital system in Queensland to run down. Every single member in this Chamber knows what a shambles the Royal Brisbane Hospital was. Members opposite have been into some of those buildings that should have been condemned in the 1950s, yet they were still allowed to operate as supposedly tertiary level wards up until Wayne Goss and a Labor Government said, "No. Enough is enough. We need \$1.5 billion over 10 years to change it."

However, under the coalition the Capital Works Program stalled, and stalled badly. That is an undeniable fact. That is how we explain part of the \$82m underspent just in one year under the former Health Minister. Fortunately, under Labor it is back on track. Under Labor, Queenslanders across the State will have world-class hospitals and community health centres. We will do it without the Horan health tax that would have ripped \$554m out of hospital budgets over nine years. I ask members: do they remember the Horan health tax? I say to Mr Horan that some of the new members do not, but we do. That was where the member for Toowoomba South, as Minister, handed out capital works money with one hand and then took it back from the hospitals in a capital works repayment in the other. What a neat trick! "We will give you some money to build things but we will take money back in the Horan health tax." That is something that is not being done now. That was abolished under Labor.

The member for Maroochydore is so out of touch. In a media release of 3 March, when referring to the Townsville Hospital redevelopment she even confused the Public Accounts Committee with the Public Works Committee. However, that is just one of the many, many mistakes she has made. She was wrong again there.

In the few seconds remaining to me, I remind the member for Toowoomba South that the people of Brisbane's north side have not forgiven him for ripping out the community hospital facilities at the Prince Charles Hospital. I will detail further how the member caved in to the medical mafia at the Royal Brisbane Hospital and, through ripping out the facilities at the Prince Charles Hospital, not only deprived the people of Brisbane's north side of services but also added tens of millions of dollars of extra costs to the rebuilding of the Prince Charles Hospital. The member's performance as Minister was a disgrace. I support the current Minister.

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