



Speech by

Mr TIM MULHERIN

MEMBER FOR MACKAY

Hansard 28 October 1999

APPROPRIATION BILL
Estimates Committee E
Report

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (12.06 p.m.): In speaking to the report of Estimates Committee E, I thank the deputy chair and member for Hinchinbrook, Marc Rowell, the other members of the committee, Ministers and their departmental officers for their cooperation and contributions during the Estimates process. I commend also Ms Veronica Rodgers and the committee secretariat, the Chief Hansard Reporter, Mr Alan Watson, and his staff and the parliamentary attendants for their valuable support and assistance.

The committee examined the budgets of Queensland Health and the Department of Mines and Energy. Previous Government speakers have dealt with the budget of the Department of Mines and Energy. In the time that is available to me, I intend to speak to the budget of Queensland Health. The Queensland Labor Government is implementing the largest hospital building and refurbishment plan in Australia. The visionary Statewide Health building program was initiated by a Labor Government in 1992. The program includes the rebuilding, refurbishment and re-equipping of public hospitals, aged-care facilities and community health centres throughout Queensland. The total cost of this program is now estimated at \$2.8 billion. During 1998-99, the program reached its peak with \$632m spent on the capital works program. This financial year, more than \$563m will be invested. That includes major investment in the Herston hospital campus, the Princess Alexandra Hospital and the new Townsville Hospital.

However, there are highlights in communities across the State. An amount of \$9.2m is earmarked towards the refurbishment of Cairns Hospital's A and B blocks, which house the general wards and support services for the clinical wards. This year, there is an allocation of \$26.6m for mental health facilities, including new accommodation for psychogeriatric patients at Charters Towers. There are new facilities for patients with acquired brain injury at the Moreton Bay Nursing Care Unit at Wynnum. At the Toowoomba Hospital, we are building new and expanded facilities and services for acute mental health patients. We are also redeveloping Wolston Park. Another significant investment is the \$20.5m allocated to the Mater Hospitals to redevelop the Mater Children's Hospital.

There is building activity right across the State. We are completing and commissioning a new community health centre at Cunnamulla, which will integrate the current Aboriginal medical service. At Bamaga, we are building a new 14-bed acute facility and we are building new facilities at Palm Island. We are also involved in the progressive completion and commissioning of a new link building for the Bundaberg Hospital.

In my electorate of Mackay, \$16.6m will be spent to complete Stage 3 and Stage 4 of the hospital redevelopment. The redevelopment at Mackay will include a new women's section, a child and adolescent unit, a new medical records unit, a new allied health building, a new front entry, an emergency department and a new ambulance entry, a new day procedures unit, refurbished medical imaging, a refurbished intensive care unit, a new fourth operating theatre and a dedicated aged-care rehabilitation unit. All of that work should be completed by Christmas 2000.

Queensland Health's capital works branch has become extremely proficient at designing and managing these large projects and ensuring that Queenslanders get real value for money from their

hospitals and other health services. We are building a network of modern, first-class hospitals and other health services throughout the State. They allow Queensland to keep pace with modern best practice in health care.

However, under this Government, Health is about much more than hospitals. We are building a sustainable health system that does its utmost to keep people out of hospitals or, if treatment is required, a health system that treats people close to where they live. For example, an additional \$5m was allocated in this year's budget to support community-based palliative care services for the terminally ill. The Government recognises that many people who suffer from progressively deteriorating illness want to remain in their homes for as long as possible. That is as it should be and we are making it possible.

This year the Government is injecting a further \$13m into mental health initiatives. This will ensure the continued expansion of community-based mental health services in line with the Government's 10-year mental health strategy for Queensland. The Government is tackling the drug problem. A new training program is being developed to assist medical practitioners to detox drug dependent people in the community. A sum of \$40,000 has been made available in this year's budget to conduct three training sessions for 45 medical practitioners throughout the State who want to be involved in drug detoxification programs. This program complements three other drug training programs funded by Queensland Health, including the Methadone Training program, the Naltrexone Relapse Prevention program and the addiction studies courses at the University of Queensland. Those four programs make up the most comprehensive training program in substance abuse available for health professionals in Australia.

Finally, throughout the Estimates process the Minister for Health and the Minister for Mines and Energy demonstrated that they were on top of their portfolios through their knowledge and their clear vision for the future for their departments and Queensland. I commend the report to the Committee.
