



Speech by

WARREN PITT

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Hansard 26 August 1999

NORTH QUEENSLAND MEDICAL SCHOOL

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (10.24 a.m.): As a proud north Queenslander, I was delighted when it was announced that north Queensland was to have a medical school of its own. Last year, after Minister Edmond and stakeholders reached agreement on the set-up of the school, it seemed that the medical school at James Cook University in Townsville was a goer for the year 2000. That was great news for north Queensland and great news for our kids who wanted to study medicine. They did not have to go to Brisbane, or even further south. It was even better news for dozens of rural communities who had given up hope of ever getting big city doctors to move to the bush.

The deal brokered by Minister Edmond was that Queensland would put in \$10m and the Commonwealth would put in \$10m to build the facility—as long as all the right accreditation was in place. As always, the Commonwealth was to find student places.

\$10m was allocated in last year's State Health budget, with \$2m of that handed over to James Cook University months ago for the design work. Although James Cook University kept talking about next year's opening—and an article to this effect appeared in Tuesday's Townsville Bulletin—and although Queensland has already advanced some of the money, I doubt that the Commonwealth is going to come to the party when it said it would.

I have here two Commonwealth documents—one a media release by the Federal Minister for Education, David Kemp—and each of these documents fuels my unease. To quote directly from the DEETYA document—

"The first intake of students will be enrolled at the start of the 2001 academic year."

Dr Kemp says exactly the same thing—2001—not 2000, as promised. I table those documents.

The Beattie Labor Government has put up and the State's money is there. James Cook University has already spent some of it. But not one Commonwealth dollar—not one brass razoo—has been handed over. Clearly, the Commonwealth has no intention of that happening this year. Students are not meant to begin in the year 2000. The Opposition needs to get on the phone quick smart to find out why their Canberra mates are now reneging. While those opposite are at it, would they mind asking Dr Kemp to explain to the kids and parents of north Queensland just what is happening with our medical school?
