



Speech by

**Hon. WENDY EDMOND**

**MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA**

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Hansard 11 March 1999

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Aged Care**

**Hon. W. M. EDMOND** (Mount Coot-tha— ALP) (Minister for Health) (9.49 a.m.), by leave: Last year I raised the issue of the Commonwealth's review of funding arrangements for aged care. Queensland has the lowest level of Commonwealth Government subsidies on a per patient basis in Australia. Queensland receives \$26,413 per occupied place compared with a national average of \$29,917 and over \$31,000 in New South Wales, Tasmania and the Northern Territory. I am concerned that Queensland residents in nursing homes continue to be disadvantaged. In this International Year of Older Persons, Queensland's aged citizens are being denied an estimated \$44m in Commonwealth funding towards their care and support.

This issue has been argued back and forth with the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth sought to deflect the issue to the Productivity Commission in order to delay making a decision. In July 1998, the Federal Treasurer referred the matter of the disparity in coalescence of this payment to the Productivity Commission. The Productivity Commission is the Federal Government's principal advisory body on micro-economic reform—the independent umpire. The commission has reached conclusions favourable to Queensland providers. The commission reported in January 1999, and stated in respect of the Queensland funding situation that Queensland was historically underfunded and acknowledged that the move to a national uniform basic subsidy has merit. I quote from the report at page 73, which states—

"Providers in Queensland are particularly disadvantaged by the current arrangements ... and ... some short term relief for Queensland providers is warranted."

The Federal Government has not provided any interim relief for the aged care providers in Queensland. I have written to the Honourable Bronwyn Bishop, MP, Minister for Aged Care. I have urged the Federal coalition Government to take an immediate decision to provide interim relief to Queensland aged care providers while the Government was considering the full implications of the recommendations.

In November last year, I also wrote to my State and Commonwealth parliamentary counterparts to urge their support for a fair deal for Queensland. I have been heartened by the strong bipartisan support. I thank those members, both on this side of the House and opposite, for their support for Queensland's nursing home residents. I call on the Federal Minister for Aged Care, the Honourable Bronwyn Bishop, to act immediately on the Productivity Commission's recommendation. I call on her to respect the decision of the umpire, to provide interim relief to the aged care providers of Queensland, implement a fairer allocation of funding to the State providers in Queensland and to look after our aged in Queensland.

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