



Speech by

Hon. WENDY EDMOND

MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA

Hansard 15 April 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Health, Enterprise Bargaining

Hon. W. M. EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha— ALP) (Minister for Health) (9.45 a.m.), by leave: I am proud to inform the House that Queensland Health employees have overwhelmingly endorsed the proposed enterprise bargaining agreement—EB3. I am also proud to have delivered a fair and responsible agreement to the health services of Queensland without a single act of industrial disputation. Contrast that outcome to the turbulent and disruptive industrial campaign presided over by the previous Health Minister, the member for Toowoomba South. At the time the newspaper carried daily headlines such as "Government talks fail to halt strike" and "Health unions angry despite wage increase".

I was determined that this current round of enterprise bargaining would be conducted promptly and with concentration on the priorities shared between the staff, their union representatives and Queensland Health. Queensland Health is a complicated and diverse organisation, and enterprise bargaining negotiations for meeting the industrial interests of over 62,000 individual employees are indeed a challenge. In addition, my Government was left with a miserable enterprise bargaining legacy from the previous Minister. Not only was there a substantial and unattainable saving to be found out of EB2; the agreement did not address the issues which the health workers believed were appropriate to the improvement of the health system. It is an underestimation to say that the cashable savings mentality of the coalition's EB2 was a disaster.

Queensland Health employees deserve greater respect than to demand cash savings from the services that they provide to the population of Queensland. The Labor Government has fully funded this enterprise agreement. The 5% increase, to be paid over 20 months, has been approved by the Cabinet Budget Review Committee and will be supplemented from the Consolidated Fund. Compare this with the \$25m unfunded cashable savings under the previous coalition agreement.

This agreement contains a moderate wage rise compared with the national average outcome results for public sector enterprise bargaining. In addition, it allows for rectification of a variety of problems for all occupational areas, such as remote area incentives and classification anomalies—all fully funded at a cost of about \$135m over a full year. The respect owing to the staff extends to the acceptance that the staff will always adopt efficient processes for the delivery of services without resorting to a big stick approach.

We are talking about health professionals whose motivation to quality health services attracted them to enter their occupations in the first place. With good planning, effective management and leadership development, our staff will continue to work towards the delivery of quality patient services in the hospital and, more importantly, in the unsung area of community health services. This is the Labor Government's approach to enterprise bargaining in Queensland Health. Therefore, I am especially pleased that EB3 will proceed to the certification stage of the industrial process without adversely affecting the morale of our hardworking employees.
