



Speech by

**Hon. WENDY EDMOND**

**MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA**

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Hansard 26 August 1999

### HEALTH SERVICES

**Hon. W. M EDMOND** (Mount Coot-tha— ALP) (Minister for Health) (6.15 p.m.): The Government opposes this cynical and hypocritical censure motion. What a load of nonsense! There is no secret agenda to cut back and privatise health services in this State. There is no cutting back. The public health system is not for sale. The Premier has repeated in the House many times this morning and during the week—and I will say it again for the benefit of those opposite who simply do not seem to understand; I know they are a bit thick, and I know she cannot count, but we would at least think she could understand what we are saying—the public health system is not for sale. I have said it before and I will repeat it again as many times as the Opposition gives me the chance to do so.

I am proud that the public health system is treating more patients under this Government. Nothing has been cut. We are treating more patients. More services are being provided and more hospitals are being built. In contrast to the performance of the coalition, record numbers of elective surgery procedures are now being performed. The capital works program is back on track. It is not frozen, as it was under members opposite. It is not lost or underspent, as it was previously. We have increased the range of extra services, such as palliative care, school nurses and PPP programs. Everything is being implemented.

The Health Strategy Advisory Project was developed to help identify the current and future needs of the Queensland Health system. Health does need to constantly change due to things such as changing population demographics. If the member opposite does not understand that, she is thicker than even I thought she was.

The project's terms of reference reflected the concerns raised by every single State leader with the Commonwealth Government. Also, every State Health Minister of all political persuasions has raised these concerns. These concerns are now being raised at a Senate inquiry. How less secretive can we get? These concerns will be examined by a Senate inquiry. Yes, the Health Strategy Advisory Project did come up with a range of recommendations. That is what it was meant to do; that is what it was for; that was its purpose. As I have said repeatedly, some of those recommendations have been implemented. They were already being implemented long before the strategy report. Some parts are not being implemented because they are not supported.

Queensland will not follow the disastrous entry into privatisation made by the Tory Governments of South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia. It has not worked there; it will not work here. The only Queensland Government intent on privatisation was the previous coalition Government. Do honourable members remember this little beauty? Joan Sheldon's Fitzgerald audit recommended the Horan health tax—the capital charge. We got rid of that as soon as we came into office. It recommended selling off everything except the morgues and the gardens and perhaps the garden gnomes—some of whom are sitting opposite. What did it recommend selling off? It recommended selling off in-patient care, outpatient care, health services, pathology services and pharmacy services. We stopped that, not members opposite. What is more, in July 1996 they set up their own high-powered implementation team, which I hope Dr Watson will tell us about, to implement the 82 recommendations of the Fitzgerald audit's four consultants. The Commission of Audit implementation office operated for 18 months out of its own flash leased accommodation on the ninth floor of Capital Hill. It had four senior

staff, led by the executive officer, Dr Peter Crossman. But they were not going to do that, were they? They were just pretending!

We have not set up some high-powered team in executive office suites somewhere at the top end of town. Under the Labor Government, the public health services are not for sale. What was the Horan health tax going to do? We know what it was going to do, but do members up the back have any idea what Horan's health tax was going to do? It was going to take \$144m out of the operating budgets of the hospitals in the first three years and then \$85m out of the budget in each and every year after that. It would have taken \$10m off the Royal Brisbane Hospital budget and \$1m from the Bundaberg Hospital. What was the member for Bundaberg saying about that? They were going to take \$2m from the Gold Coast Hospital. Who is standing up for it? It would have taken \$5m from the Townsville Hospital. Any new hospital was to pay a capital charge. Where were Opposition members hiding when Joan Sheldon and Mike Horan dreamt up that little beauty?

This Government is determined to get the right mix of services and facilities. It is committed to providing services wherever people live regardless of their economic circumstances. The Liberal and National Parties in Queensland are the only ones who ever really seriously contemplated selling off Queensland's free hospital system.

Time expired.

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