



Speech by

**Hon. WENDY EDMOND**

**MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA**

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Hansard 28 October 1999

**APPROPRIATION BILL  
Estimates Committee E  
Report**

**Hon. W. M EDMOND** (Mount Coot-tha) (Minister for Health) (12.26 p.m.): Firstly, I recognise all of the hard work that goes into preparing for the Estimates by Queensland Health staff and the many staff in ministerial offices around the State. Getting all of the information together is a big task and I appreciate everything my officers have done to support me in this regard.

I thank also the chairman of the committee and all of the members of Estimates Committee E. For the information of the previous speaker, I indicate that, yes, I will be selling off wasted assets around the State to do what I am doing, for example, at Redcliffe at the moment, namely, providing an expanded new facility by selling off bits and pieces so that the people of Redcliffe have a community health facility that is worth having. If the honourable member has a problem with that, he should go to Redcliffe and tell them that. Yes, I will be selling off the existing Townsville Hospital site, after the new hospital has been completed. To suggest anything else is arrant nonsense. Should we sit on paddocks or little houses that nobody has rented for donkey's years just so that the honourable member for Redlands can feel comfortable? That is nonsense.

The Beattie Government has made Health a top priority. This year we are delivering another record recurrent budget of \$3.45 billion to meet the health needs of Queenslanders. In addition, another \$563m is earmarked for capital works projects. This is a big capital works project budget. Almost all of the substantial increase in Health funding this year has come from the State Government, with the Commonwealth Government contributing just \$20.7m extra. By contrast, the Beattie Government is injecting both money and confidence into our free public hospital system, which was treated so poorly by the previous Government.

As we run through the initiatives funded in this Budget, we touch on many of the hopes and aspirations of ordinary Queenslanders. We know that at some stage one in five Queenslanders will suffer mental health problems. Mental health is an issue of fundamental importance to our community. While members opposite paid lip-service to the needs of patients and their families, we have backed our commitments with hard cash. This budget again boosts funding for mental health and allows many programs introduced last year to be expanded.

This Government has made job creation a priority, and Health is no exception. This year our Statewide Health building program will create more than 8,300 full-time equivalent positions in the building and construction industry. In 1998-99 our initiatives created 733 new jobs in Queensland Health and there are hundreds more in the pipeline this year. The new Noosa Hospital will create 200 health positions. The new Robina Hospital will create about 350 new health positions. Up to 50 additional skills-based nurses will be recruited over the next two years, an additional 18 child health nurses will be employed and 11 extra emergency registered nurses will be appointed to emergency departments. They are just a few of the examples. We will also appoint about 80 extra clinical staff in both mental health in-patient and community sectors.

Extra scientists and technical officers will be employed at the John Tonge Centre for forensic services and we will be employing more staff specialising in indigenous health. We are skilling

Queensland and committing \$20m over four years to support the establishment of the comprehensive cancer research centre at the Queensland Institute of Medical Research. We are providing a further \$8m to help establish a medical school at James Cook University, and the money is there; it is up front; it is being spent.

An extra \$4m will be shared by the Australian Red Cross blood service and haemophilia centres. There is also \$1m available to expand services at child health centres. I am delighted that \$3m is available to expand our strengthening families parenting initiative, which has been such a support to stressed out families around the State. We have boosted funding to community palliative care services, as has already been mentioned.

**Mr Mickel:** What about the school nurses?

**Mrs EDMOND:** We are expanding the school nurse program. We have provided a \$2m a year boost in funding to non-Government mental health organisations because we recognise the important role they play. We have also reduced waiting times for elective surgery. We have increased funding—\$12m more—into Home and Community Care services in this State. We have tackled waiting times in public emergency departments. We have the capital works program back on track—actually building hospitals and equipping world-class hospitals for Queensland families.

I can understand why the Opposition members do not like this, because it really shows them up. The Government has also fully funded the equity return that they are whingeing and whining about rather than implementing a capital charge that was going to rip money out of the recurrent budgets of hospitals. This is a good budget. These are positive initiatives, not the negative harping we have heard.

Time expired.

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