



Speech by

DESLEY BOYLE

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

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HOSPITAL WAITING LISTS

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (6.22 p.m.): I am very pleased to second the Minister's amendment to the ridiculous motion that was moved by the member for Maroochydore. Since 1946, Queensland has had a proud history of free hospital care. It is indeed a shame that any honourable member of this House should erode the confidence of the public of Queensland in their free hospital system without basis and with the implication that were the member opposite Minister for Health, that she could do better than the present Minister has done. Of course, that is only an implication without any hard facts given or suggestions made to this Government on what could be done better. The member gave no indication of where more funds could be applied, or how they would be obtained from the Federal coalition Government. No, of course not, considering the record of the previous Government of only some two and a half years ago when it did not reduce waiting lists. At that time, it was not the situation in Queensland that any patient could roll up to a public hospital and obtain instant care, but the member's implication is that we should be able to achieve that goal.

In fact, we have achieved, and we have achieved well. I refer to the increases in the Health budget over the past three Beattie Government Budgets: in 1998-99, \$3.12 billion; in 1999-2000, \$3.45 billion; and in 2000-01, \$3.81 billion. I challenge the member for Maroochydore to tell us exactly what she would do differently if she were the Minister. Would she increase the budget further? Where would she get the money to do that considering, of course, that her partners in crime in the capital city of our country, in Canberra, have devoted over \$3 billion to the private health system? How indeed would the member increase the Health budget when Queensland as a State—as are all States—is reliant on the Federal Government's handout of people's taxes for public hospitals, yet that money was devoted instead to the private health system. What indeed has the member to say about that? Nothing! Absolutely nothing!

I will talk for a little while about the Cairns Hospital. I know it well. The member for Maroochydore dared to raise the issue of waiting lists at that hospital. Despite the dislocation owing to the wonderful redevelopment that is going on at that hospital, the staff have absolutely scored for the patients in Cairns and the far north. In terms of that hospital's waiting lists, 100% of urgent and 96% of semi-urgent patients are being seen on time. That is a proud record. If the member opposite had any kind of responsibility, she would indeed give recognition to the fine work that the staff have done in achieving that outcome. The member would also give recognition to how well the \$127m redevelopment of the Cairns Base Hospital is proceeding. She would give recognition to the \$1.2m CT scanner that the Beattie Government has funded and put in place. The member would give recognition to the new emergency medicine doctor who has been appointed and to the boosted computer resources that will take pressure off the busy emergency department.

Mind you, in terms of partners in crime, I am also absolutely embarrassed by my local representative of the AMA, Dr Peter Smith, who dares to say, if the Cairns Post quote is correct, that the AMAQ will implement the report cards that it has sent to doctors at the Cairns Base Hospital because—

"We need all the ammunition we can get to point out the deficiencies of the Government and hopefully get something done about it."

I am so angry about that. We could expect better of the doctors of our State. I have qualifications in psychology and in science and I can say that the AMAQ report card is not a survey that is worth 5c. It is

biased. The questions lead to the answers that are desired. That the AMAQ dares to stand by those report cards is a shocking thing in itself. I remind Dr Smith and other doctors in this State that this survey is about the political aspirations of the senior person in their organisation.

What about the people of Queensland who are used by these other agendas? In fact, the Cairns Hospital and many other hospitals, with the massive increases in Health budgets that they receive year after year, are giving the very best care that we can provide. They cannot provide all that they would like, no. They do not provide an instant service for every person who wants it. We all wish that we could provide that, but these hospitals are providing a good service, certainly for urgent and semi-urgent patients. The Health Department is also providing expanded services to community health as well as to hospitals. I am indeed proud to stand with the Minister and support her amendment to the motion.
