



Speech by

Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard 1 June 2000

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (7.12 p.m.): A virtually untouched \$120m Commonwealth grant to cut adverse effects in Queensland hospitals should have been apportioned to the Gold Coast Hospital before the sterilisation debacle. The Queensland Health Minister is constantly complaining about not having enough Federal Government moneys, yet she has let this sizeable grant languish for two years while hospitals such as the Gold Coast Hospital and many others have desperately needed resources to address issues of quality patient care. Queensland has been progressively paid this money since the start of the Australian Health Care Agreement two years ago. The money has been paid each week into State coffers, and this is where most of it remains, unspent, as was recently revealed to a Senate committee.

On the Gold Coast, 32 people's lives are in limbo as they await the outcome of tests since the failed sterilisation process resulted in potentially not sterile equipment being used in surgery. The Health Department's response was a wafer-thin report resulting from an internal investigation. The Government blamed human error, however the scanty public evidence reveals a series of human errors which indicate a systems failure typical of a hospital under stress.

Recent research shows that Australian hospitals may be killing or injuring 10.6% of patients, which is up to three times the United States rate. A key point in the research indicates that this is due to the lack of external monitoring and accountability mechanisms. Is it any wonder we are sceptical of the Health Department and the Government's internal review of the Gold Coast Hospital disaster, or of any other hospital at which adverse outcomes are experienced?

This morning I asked a question relating to Bundaberg Hospital workers and their concerns about being under stress and having a lack of resources and that there could be quality issues affecting the care of patients. The Health Minister refused to answer that question. Those concerns remain in Bundaberg. They also remain in a number of other hospitals. Yet \$120m of Government funding has not been allocated.

Time expired.
