



Speech by

Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard 22 June 2000

HOSPITAL WASTE

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (10.16 a.m.): I am seeking answers from the Health Minister about a serious and disgusting situation in the Fraser Coast area caused by Queensland Health penny pinching. Health Minister Wendy Edmond needs to explain whether she is aware of the problem of a significant portion of untreated theatre waste from the Maryborough and Hervey Bay Hospitals continuing to be dumped at local council tips as landfill, rather than being autoclaved or incinerated.

This potentially infectious theatre waste has been collected and transported through Hervey Bay in normal garbage trucks, which may leak, rather than in medical waste disposal vehicles. I will not outline the full array of materials this involves, but it does include blood-soaked dressings and some discarded internal organs. I understand that the material is dumped at local tips and, while soil may eventually be placed on top, I note with concern that wildlife, be they rats or seagulls, are obviously frequent visitors with potential to spread contagion.

I do not think these Fraser Coast communities would find such hygiene standards acceptable when most other regional and metropolitan hospitals have theatre waste material properly disposed of. Indeed, Queenslanders want to know that the department charged with improving public health is not in fact threatening public health when it looks for ways to come in on budget.

This matter needs to be investigated and the practice of inappropriately dumping theatre waste stopped. However, there must be rigorous scrutiny of the waste disposal contracts that Queensland Health has signed, the standards it has or has not specified and the monitoring of these contracts. I am calling on the Health Minister to investigate the matter and to explain how the Health Department could allow public health to be threatened.
