



Speech by

## Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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Hansard 6 September 2000

### HOSPITAL RESOURCES

**Miss SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—NPA) (10.26 a.m.): The human trauma of another major sterilisation failure of surgical equipment with 81 patients called back for blood testing in north Queensland is indicative of an ailing State health system and bad Government management. The Health Minister may try to pass off this latest incident after the Gold Coast Hospital sterilisation failure affecting 32 people earlier in the year as of minimal risk and only human error. However, like the Gold Coast, these people in north Queensland are going through the hell of not knowing whether they have been infected with life-altering or potentially terminal diseases following their colonoscopy procedures at Townsville and Ingham hospitals between 10 July and 14 August.

As happened with the Gold Coast debacle, there had to have been a systematic failure involving multiple errors—not a single case of human error—in order for these unacceptable and personally terrorising incidents to occur. Hospital staff are under stress. They are overworked and systems fail, and that is dangerous for patients and the overall Health budget as litigation costs grow. I understand that the Queensland Health Department paid out about \$13m last year in legal costs and payouts and is currently facing up to \$30m worth of claims. As the bonuses and salary packages get fatter for the fat cats under the Beattie Labor Government's wrong priorities and doctors, nurses and allied staff find they are understaffed for their responsibilities, the department will be paying more out in litigation.

The Health Minister would be advised to practise some prevention of these problems by spending more on proper staffing levels. Anyone who believes that there is no great problem with the health system probably does not talk to either the constituents who ring the offices of members of Parliament with their real-life examples or Health staff, many of whom are lower paid, casual staff who cannot get job security after three or four years of promises and who find that their hours have been cut back despite growing work levels. The surgical waiting lists are growing.

Time expired.

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