



Speech by

Hon. ANNA BLIGH

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

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CENSURE OF MINISTER FOR HEALTH

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education) (6.21 p.m.): I am pleased to second the amendment that has been moved by the Premier. To be a minister in any government is an honour and a privilege. To be a minister in a portfolio such as Health, which touches the lives of thousands of people, employs hundreds of Queenslanders and improves the quality of life of the entire state, is a double honour. It is also a demanding, challenging and often thankless task. It requires a person with a great deal of personal commitment, a person with an intelligent understanding of complex systems, somebody who has a vision of a better and a healthier Queensland, and a person who has the personal stamina to keep up with the pace of this kind of portfolio. In the member for Mount Coot-tha, our government has such a person.

Tonight, I am very pleased to have the chance to place my admiration for the Health Minister on the public record. In Queensland, we are very lucky to have a Minister for Health who, firstly, is known throughout the health system and in other jurisdictions in the world for her lifelong personal commitment to the work of health workers. We have a minister whose academic training and whose lengthy experience in the health sector as a radiographer has equipped her with the best possible understanding of the complexity of the health system. We have a minister whose vision for a better health system and a vision for a healthier Queensland is evident in a long list of achievements that people no doubt will hear more about tonight, but which the Premier has been able to put on the record. The Premier started to list this minister's achievements and after five minutes he was still unable to finish the list. He could have gone on and on. It is a very long and proud list.

Importantly, we have a minister who has the stamina for the job. We have a minister who, after three and a half years—in a very tough portfolio, I have to say—shows absolutely no signs of running out of puff. She has the appetite that she had three and a half years ago for this task. Managing the health system, managing a portfolio such as Health, requires a certain set of personal characteristics. As someone who has previously been responsible for the portfolios of Families and Disability Services, I know that sometimes a minister has to have the ability to distance themselves from some very difficult, personal and traumatic stories that inevitably come across their desk.

But we have in this minister someone who goes way beyond merely managing the system. She manages the system in an outstanding way, but she goes way beyond management. We have a minister who is dedicated to reforming the system. That dedication to reform could be outlined in numerous ways, but let me talk about just two. I refer to the legislative record of this minister. In the three and a half years that the member for Mount Coot-tha has been the Minister for Health, she has either amended, significantly updated or completely rewritten 26 of the 43 acts administered by the Health portfolio. In some cases, such as in the case of the Mental Health Act, she has substantially rewritten an act that had needed that to be done since its inception in 1974. She is the first person in 25 years to take on that task and successfully complete it.

How does that legislative record—26 out of 43—compare with the person who moves this censure motion tonight? In two and a half years, the member moved three amendments. That is an average of one amendment a year. At that rate, it would have taken the member 26 years to get the record that our Health Minister has achieved in three and a half years. One of Queensland's laziest Health ministers dares to come into this place tonight and question the member for Mount Coot-tha.

I refer to the hospital rebuilding program. The Opposition Leader concluded his speech by warning people on this side of the House that the public was witnessing a decline in the health system. That is not happening in my electorate. I have the honour of representing the electorate of South Brisbane, in which the Princess Alexandra Hospital is located. Thanks to the work of this minister, one of our most run-down facilities has been turned into a state-of-the-art hospital. It is an outstanding facility that could be found anywhere in the world. In 1996, the member froze that rebuilding program. What about the Mater Children's Hospital? Again, the member took money out of that hospital and this minister fixed it.
