



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR BARAMBAH

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BLOOD DONORS

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (7.18 p.m.): Blood donors are a valuable resource in our communities, yet in very many small towns throughout Queensland the ability to drop into a blood bank and donate regularly has been taken away. Where once a workman could give a pint during his lunch break, now he is more likely to drink a pint instead. As we are all very aware, that could lead to the need for a pint or two of the good stuff in hospital in the event of an accident.

Calls for urgent regular donations of blood are almost continuous, yet it was prior to Christmas 2000 that a mobile unit last visited our area to harvest blood. Since then, there has been no other visit to collect this valuable life-giving donation. Why? It could not be for the lack of donors, because there were approximately 100 eager donors on the list, willing and waiting—and waiting and waiting.

When the mobile unit did visit, all donors were booked in for a specific time. Although no-one minds waiting for a little while, up to two or more hours was a bit ridiculous. Many people were turned away because the mobile blood unit could not cope. One of the staff of the unit, whilst taking my donation, said that they had not realised how far out we were. A miscalculation of time had put them very much behind time, hence the turning away. Therefore, the cost per pint given must have risen considerably.

For some residents giving blood is a regular 'feel good' exercise which they willingly participate in every three months, because they believe in the need and they hear the constant calls that go out for more blood donors. Unfortunately, many people now feel that their willing donation is no longer wanted. Many of these donors regularly receive letters asking for them to donate and continually outlining the urgency and sometimes conveying the desperate shortage of some of the rarer blood groups. For those donors there is a need now to travel to Gympie, Toowoomba or Strathpine, I am told. We are not talking about a quick trip to the next suburb; we are talking about a trip of over two hours one way, which for many of the regular donors is a very big ask indeed, not only in the cost of fuel—as we all know, it can often in the country be 10c higher than in the city—but also in time. To travel to these towns to donate would take in excess of six hours, because no-one would advise donors to drive very soon after giving blood.

Giving blood was something I used to participate in, but unfortunately it is one service I can no longer perform. But I hope many people will take up the call. During the years I did donate, it was a regular occurrence in a very small country town with a population of just over 600 people. Every three months in the outpatients clinic the doctor and sister would run the donors through and send the blood on its way. Marion, the sister, would be assisted by the community volunteers, who served the drinks and bikkies. It was no hardship and it was never difficult to fill the quotas. So why has this service been stopped when there is this constant call for blood?

I ask that the minister seriously consider reinstating regular visits of the mobile unit to these towns or, if this is too expensive, allowing those willing to donate to have regular donating days in the hospitals.
