



Speech by

**Mrs D. PRATT**

**MEMBER FOR BARAMBAH**

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Hansard 31 October 2001

### **HOSPITAL WAITING LISTS**

**Mrs PRATT** (Nanango—Ind) (11.00 p.m.): Long waiting lists to see a doctor, to receive an operation in hospital or to seek dental attention are just a case of there not being enough medical staff, particularly in regional, rural and remote Queensland. The Department of Health has started campaigns to rectify this problem, like the campaign to educate more ICU nurses, and I do applaud the minister for this initiative. However, despite all of Minister Edmond's and her department's efforts to bring down waiting list times, it still is not good enough.

At the moment at one hospital in my electorate there is a four-year waiting period for dental care. The waiting list at the dental clinic, which is part of the Kingaroy Hospital—this is a waiting list for people who want work done on natural teeth—is 49 months long, that is, four years and one month. The denture waiting list is 14 months long. This is a much shorter waiting list because every year a dentist and technician come to the area for a three-moth period and, according to the dental clinic, shorten the waiting list by approximately 10 months in a three-month period.

The general anaesthetic waiting list is separated into two different categories at the Kingaroy Dental Clinic: priority 1 and priority 2. The waiting time for priority 1 patients is 11 months. Priority 2 patients have to wait 25 months. The orthodontist's waiting list is very short compared to the other lists, at only six months, and according to the Kingaroy Dental Clinic a visiting orthodontist will visit the hospital on average two days a month. The re-call waiting list, which is for a check-up visit after the dentist has completed work, is up to date, meaning that there is no waiting list for these patients.

I have had cases of people walking into my office—people who are losing their teeth—because they cannot get in to see a dentist quickly enough. One constituent has stated that he was in such pain that he was taking three pain killers every two hours. He was told that he could only get help if he went to the dental clinic at a certain time. He was told that the waiting list three years ago was almost three and a half years long. It has now blown out to four and is getting worse by the month. This man has lost three teeth since 1996 due to the fact that he did not receive medical attention. Each tooth has fallen out by itself, and the pain that he has suffered is a result of this government not getting its priorities right.

Why is this happening? Australia is not supposedly a Third World country. Money that should be going to the public health system is going to sporting fields and pedestrian bridges. Nearly every party platform is to improve health for regional, rural and remote Queensland, and yet I do not remember seeing any major budget funding going to any facility west of Toowoomba. That town is not the be-all and end-all of the great south-west of this state.

Several suggestions have been made, including placing more dentists in the region. Requests have been made to the Health Minister and the Premier's office requesting that the government place a dental facility at Nanango Hospital to help drastically cut the over four-year waiting lists at the Kingaroy Dental Clinic.

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