



Speech by

Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard 1 May 2001

RETRACTABLE NEEDLES

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (10.24 a.m.): How many more Queenslanders have to suffer the terror of unnecessary needle-stick injuries and potentially deadly infections while the Beattie Labor government drags its heels and does nothing to introduce retractable needles? This government talks but fails to act. In February last year—more than 12 months ago—the coalition introduced this as its policy because it knows that there is grave public concern about the inappropriate disposal of needles in public places and grave concern for people who have suffered needle-stick injuries in public places or in our health facilities.

People who suffer a needle-stick injury experience terror because they have to wait months to find out whether they are clear of possible infection, which costs thousands of dollars. Something like 5.3 million free needles were distributed in Queensland last year. I understand that a similar number was also distributed through community pharmacies. Therefore, approximately nine million or more needles were distributed in Queensland. That is a significant number, which is causing terror on our beaches and terror for the workers who clean our parks.

The reasoning of the Minister for Health in not introducing retractable needles is that she wants to send the issue to a committee for investigation. The other day she said that retractable needles cannot be used because inferior products will flood over the border—all excuses and no action! The minister said that retractable needles are unsafe, even though models have been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration. Some 16 states in America are using these needles in their health facilities, yet this minister fails to act. She has failed to reveal which needle she says is unsafe. She has delayed the process while people are suffering unnecessary injury. People are sick of seeing needles in their parks threatening their children.

Time expired.
