



Speech by

Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard 2 May 2001

NAMBOUR HOSPITAL

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (7.19 p.m.): I rise to talk about an issue of great concern to the Sunshine Coast and certainly to members of my electorate, and that is this dispute that has arisen with doctors and other staff at Nambour Hospital over their concerns and frustrations about staff shortages and their very understandable anger when the Health Minister spoke out publicly saying that they were grandstanding and that their concerns were nonsense. Dr Roger Morris said that in the past year about 12 specialists have resigned from Nambour because they were frustrated by funding and staff shortages and a culture of contempt in Queensland Health. However, the Health Minister said that the Beattie government could not get specialists and that therefore it was going to start recruiting from overseas. The concern these doctors are raising is that 12 specialists have resigned.

I know that the government is very vulnerable on this matter. However, at the end of the day it has a dangerous majority. We have seen by the Health Minister's response that she believes she can say anything and insult anybody. We have a situation whereby in some fields, such as orthopaedics and vascular surgery, there is such a desperate shortage of surgeons that people who cannot afford to go outside the public health system are really suffering. This Health Minister's response has been one of arrogance and dismissal of those concerns.

People who are willing to work and want to work at that hospital say that they are not being listened to, that they have been insulted and that for years they have tried to resolve the issues with the minister but when they raise these issues publicly her answer is to ignore them. I ask that Premier Beattie intervene in the situation, because the picture that is becoming clearer is that, particularly since the election, if someone does not agree with this Health Minister she is willing to make very vindictive personal attacks and use other people who are useful to her cause in continuing that process of vindictive attacks.

At the end of the day, the people who are losing out are those who do not always have a voice, and they are the staff in these hospitals who can be sacked if they speak out. That is why this government does not like those people in the hospital system or on the staff who have some autonomy, who are not totally dependent upon the pay packets provided by the public hospital and who speak out, because when they speak out they are also speaking out for those other staff who will be sacked if they do so.

I have talked to those other staff who are distressed. When they raise these issues through the official channels, they are fobbed off. I believe that this Health Minister must listen to their concerns. Premier Beattie must intervene and listen to their concerns. When 12 specialists leave a hospital, something is wrong.

Time expired.
