



Speech by

## Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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Hansard 16 October 2001

### MOUNT ISA HOSPITAL

**Miss SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—NPA) (7.04 p.m.): I rise to speak on the crisis in staffing at Mount Isa Hospital. Recently when I raised this issue publicly, the government's response was to say, 'It's hysteria, it's nonsense, it's all made up.' Yet the facts had actually come from the staff at Mount Isa Hospital. The staff have gone public; the staff have said that there is a crisis with the resources that they have to work with and the number of people that are employed to do the job at that hospital.

While we know that at Mount Isa Hospital there have been ongoing problems with staffing issues, it was the staff who said that it had reached a crisis point. Only a matter of weeks ago the hospital was not doing elective surgery because of a lack of surgical nurses. The staff have come out and said that it is not safe to have doctors working in excess of 100 hours a week. Staff will not remain at the hospital if they do not get the backup, support and resources that they need.

I reiterate the staff's call for an independent review of the staffing situation at the Mount Isa Hospital. To date the government has done nothing. It has said that this is all under control, that it is looking after it thank you very much, and that there is no crisis. However, the staff have clearly said that there is a problem that needs an independent review. Clearly, they are not satisfied that the actions that to date Queensland Health and the minister have claimed they have taken are, in fact, satisfactory or are going to meet the needs of that hospital or the needs of the region. Once one gets below a critical mass of staff, obviously it gets harder to retain those who are already there because of the hours that they have to work. We have seen that happen. People who have given terrific service are unable to remain given the hours that they are expected to work.

There must be an independent review. This does not have to be an expensive or lengthy process, but it is not satisfactory for Queensland Health to say that it is dealing with the issue when one sees the level of concern being expressed and the poor staff morale at this hospital.

I challenge the minister to tell how she is measuring staff morale in Queensland Health facilities. When talking to staff at a number of facilities, one hears that they really do not want to work for the public system any more because they have not had their concerns addressed. To date, I do not see any independent indicator of responses from staff about staff morale unless they start resigning. There are a lot of other issues in addition to resources that the government should be addressing with regard to staff.

I reiterate the call of the Mount Isa Hospital staff who have said that they must have an independent review. They have called for a review of circumstances as well as resources in order to fix the problems that are occurring at this hospital. Their call for that review has come particularly in the last few weeks as they feel that issues have not been addressed. I reiterate that there must be a review in order to deal with the public health needs in this area.

Time expired.

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