



Speech by

Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard 4 December 2001

ROYAL BRISBANE HOSPITAL, BONE MARROW TRANSPLANT UNIT

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (10.20 a.m.): The opposition recently tabled a petition signed by more than 2,000 Gold Coast residents calling for parliament to take action over the inability of one of Australia's leading tertiary hospitals, the Royal Brisbane, to provide potentially lifesaving bone marrow transplant surgery on time. I have previously highlighted the plight of leukaemia victims who, even when they had matched bone marrow donors, were forced to wait up to six months for a bed at the hospital's transplant unit, Ward 9D. The opposition raised the cases of four women who had met and become friends while receiving treatment. They called themselves the four musketeers. One had already died waiting for a transplant; a second died that very week. The publicity this tragedy attracted brought more cases to the fore.

At the Gold Coast a father of two revealed he would have to wait until next March for a transplant, even though he had a matched donor. Almost daily there have been letters to the editor telling of more heartbreak and calling for action. A Sunshine Coast father and doctor went public about the delays which were causing enormous costs and how patients, including his son, were undergoing repeated courses of chemotherapy and antibiotics while their fully-tested donors waited anxiously for months to be summonsed.

Two weeks ago the Brisbane Coroner brought down his findings on the death of a young leukemia victim in Ward 9D last June. The Coroner was scathing in his attack on health bureaucrats, saying that the death could well have been prevented. It is the opposition's view that the Health Minister is responsible for the conduct of this department. When this issue is raised, the Health Minister merely bleats about a temporary nurse shortage or hides behind those same health bureaucrats insisting that clinical issues, not the lack of beds, are behind those deaths. As revealed by the opposition, the minister has known of this so-called temporary nurse shortage for at least two years. The problem in Ward 9D is more about the minister's lack of will in addressing an issue which is costing Queenslanders their lives. The two remaining musketeers have had their cases fast tracked since we highlighted their plight.

Time expired.
