



Speech by

**JEFF SEENEY**

**MEMBER FOR CALLIDE**

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Hansard 30 May 2001

### HEALTH SERVICES

**Mr SEENEY** (Callide—NPA) (1.09 a.m.): Of all the core responsibilities of the state government, few would argue that any are more important than the provision of health services. Queensland has long enjoyed a universal free hospital system that has been the envy of other states in Australia and certainly the envy of other people from countries around the world. Increasingly that free hospital system is under strain to cope, and the signs are easy to see. Unacceptable waiting lists for operations and dental care are the most obvious signs.

I want to table tonight a letter that was written to a constituent of mine who lives in the Widgee area and accesses health care from the Gympie Health Service District. This letter is from Peter Murphy, the District Manager of the Gympie Health Service District. I quote one small section of the letter—

I advise the best estimate of the wait is 108 weeks from when your name was placed on the list ...

I table that letter. That is similar to a number of letters that I have in my office that indicate a totally unacceptable waiting time for constituents in my electorate, and I know that situation is shared by constituents in other electorates throughout the state.

Increasingly, community groups are focusing their efforts on making up for the shortfall or filling the gaps in the government-provided services. I was especially gratified to officially open a special care unit at the Monto Hospital last weekend that had been funded by volunteers who had raised money over a period of time by a range of methods, up to and including some highly successful pig races. Other groups of volunteers are currently raising funds to provide a heliport at the same hospital. In every community that I represent, volunteers are raising funds to make up the shortfall in hospital and health services. Last week I also attended a number of functions to mark Australia's biggest morning tea where other groups of volunteers were raising funds for badly needed cancer research. I know this fundraising campaign was conducted across the state.

But there are some things that volunteers cannot do. It is a core responsibility of the state government to provide the health services that constituents in my electorate need, that constituents like the one who was written to by the manager of the Gympie Health Service deserve. Our constituents deserve reliable health services. They do not deserve letters which suggest they need to wait 108 weeks for what should be their right.

During this last two weeks in parliament, we have heard debate about the expenditure of \$300 million for the upgrading of Lang Park, \$200 million for a new arts centre, \$32 million for a footbridge across the Brisbane River, and so the list goes on. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that our priorities are very wrong. Just a portion of that expenditure would be welcomed in the state's hospital system. Just a portion of that expenditure would be welcomed even more by the people on hospital waiting lists, like the constituent who received the letter that I tabled earlier tonight. Just a portion of that expenditure would be most welcomed by the volunteers who are working hard out there in all our communities to fill the gaps in our health system.

Time expired.

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