



Speech by

Mrs J. SHELDON

MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA

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HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—Lib) (11.50 a.m.): On a number of occasions in this House I have raised the poverty of funding going into health care in Queensland from the state Labor government. Today I will reiterate a number of issues that are growing across the state, particularly in my electorate of Caloundra. I will briefly touch on the issue of dental clinics.

I have previously raised the problems of our huge waiting lists, the lack of dentists, the lack of funding, and the people in genuine pain. I have received another letter from a pensioner who was first seen on 26 July 1999 for dental services. This person needs to see a dentist. When I rang this morning they told me that they were told it would be at least another four to five months before they would get an appointment. It is ridiculous nonsense when the Health Minister says that everyone who needs to be treated is being treated. Another lady in my electorate has been on the dental waiting list for five years and still has not heard when her appointment will be. This is a regular nonsense.

Mr Lucas: The federal government took the money out.

Mrs SHELDON: It is a load of nonsense to blame the federal government and I will tell the House the history of that. The federal government contributes money towards the health system. The previous coalition government increased the amount contributed by the state by \$20 million. This government has done no such thing. This year it gave an extra \$5 million. Every other year there has been no money from this state government whatsoever. That extra \$5 million is a drop in the bucket compared to the problem. Those opposite should tell the truth instead of blaming the federal government for all their inadequacies, which is what they do. They should not think the people of Queensland believe them, because they do not. The Queensland public knows that the state government has to provide services. Telling people waiting outside a dental clinic in Caloundra at six o'clock on a cold morning that it is the federal government's fault does not impress them when they have a major toothache and they want it fixed. If those opposite put money where their mouths are, they might be able to help some of these people.

Physiotherapy services are also not being provided. According to those opposite that is probably a federal government problem, too, instead of a state government problem. There are now no physiotherapy outpatient services provided in Caloundra Hospital. No matter how old or ill a person is, they cannot get any treatment. This has happened twice in the last two weeks. A gentleman who has painful hips came to see me. It was recommended that he have physio. This man can hardly walk. He was told that the hospital could not give him any physio treatment and it did not know where he could get any treatment. This man has a very sick wife in a wheelchair who is on oxygen. He has to stay mobile to look after her. He and his doctors are very concerned that he will not be able to.

Another woman with a very serious and painful neck injury was given a letter from her doctor to get treatment at the physio clinic. However, when she got there she was told that the clinic could not see her for 12 months, if at all. She was more or less told, 'We'll call you. Don't call us.' Is this a government helping and providing for pensioners and others with health care cards? I do not think so. There is also the case of an elderly 84 year old lady who needs hip surgery urgently. A letter from her doctor states—

... that this elderly lady has been on a priority waiting list for a hip replacement since January of this year ... she first sought help with her right hip in June of last year and was referred to the Caloundra General Hospital. She was reviewed in OPD in October and advised of the need for a total hip replacement. At the original appointment the Specialist noted 'The pain is significantly interfering with her lifestyle.'

In December I wrote another letter to the hospital detailing significant decline and she was reviewed again and told that she would be placed on a priority list to have the operation as soon as possible due to the severe pain and disability ... she has had no further contact other than reassurances on the phone that she remains a priority.

I am sure that helps her greatly. The letter continues—

At this time she is in constant agony and crawls on the floor at times due to her poor mobility and inability to bear weight on her right hip.

This is from her own doctor. It continues—

This poor lady remains in constant pain and her treatment has been totally inadequate after establishing her needs. The implementation of her treatment and surgery has been non existent due solely to the financial and resource problems at the Nambour General Hospital.

I take it that this is a federal government problem, too, considering that Mr Lucas seems to feel that all problems regarding lack of health funding in this state come from the feds instead of this government and the Minister for Health.

Another major issue is the Medical Aid Subsidy Scheme, which is grossly underfunded. I have received a letter from a lady with a disabled son—and this is just one of many—saying that the wheelchair sent to her was a positive disgrace. When one looks at it, it really was. It was filthy and took two days to clean. She had been waiting for over a year for this chair. It leaked a thick grey gooey substance when a person sat on the seat. It was chipped. It was all different colours. The tyres were flat. In fact, when she complained about this, they were pumped up and went flat again. She was then given two hard tyres for the chair, which the child could not manoeuvre anyhow. The community has been trying to help this lad. I will continue to raise this issue because it is an absolute state disgrace.
