



Speech by

**ELISA ROBERTS**

**MEMBER FOR GYMPIE**

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Hansard 27 November 2002

**GOVERNMENT SERVICES, GYMPIE ELECTORATE**

**Miss ELISA ROBERTS** (Gympie—Ind) (1.54 a.m.): This morning the Minister for Health advised members of the allocation of 16 additional doctors to emergency departments in five public hospitals. The funding for additional staff has also been spent on high-growth areas such as Nambour Hospital, which has received five new medical officers along with extra nursing staff. I commend the minister on the increase in medical staff in these hospitals and I agree with her view that the federal government needs to increase the Medicare levy to provide the services to cover the growth in our population and also there is a need for the federal government to review the restrictions currently in place regarding the allocation of provider numbers.

Whilst it is true that Nambour Hospital patient numbers are on the increase, I have been advised by hospital staff that a lot of this is due to the increase in patients transferred or sent from Gympie to Nambour. In order to decrease the burden of overwork being placed on Nambour staff, the residents of the Gympie electorate would be happy to stay and be treated at Gympie Hospital, if given the choice. The population of Gympie and its surrounding suburbs is also growing, with more people living in the district than ever before, thus indicating the need for a hospital that is fully staffed.

With the merging of different wards at Gympie Hospital there is a large area of the hospital which is not being utilised. If the minister would consider funding additional staff, as she has for these other public hospitals, they could easily be accommodated. The residents of my electorate are realistic about what a regional hospital can offer. At the very least they would like to be able to give birth to their babies at Gympie rather than Nambour.

To continue on the topic of staffing issues, Gympie has only one ambulance out of three which operate after 5 p.m. Whilst there are two other ambulances located at the Gympie station, it is up to the Cooroy ambulance staff to service the Gympie area after hours if there is more than one emergency. If the Gympie station was provided with extra staff, these ambulances could be utilised rather than just sitting idle in the station overnight and this would dramatically decrease ambulance waiting times.

Staff shortages also exist amongst the police in my electorate, to the extent that when my neighbours rang 000 a few weeks ago on a Sunday they were told that an officer would not be free to attend their property until the following day due to the lack of rostered staff. The people of the Gympie electorate pay their taxes and deserve the same services as those offered in other electorates. I find it most disconcerting that the electorates that have received extra staff for vital services are those that have Labor members. Like it or not, the ministers responsible for these services are beholden to the people of the whole of Queensland, not just the chosen few. For the record, nowhere in this speech have I knocked any of the staff of these services. It is the need for adequate funding for Gympie which I have addressed tonight.

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