



Speech by

Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard 17 April 2002

HEALTH FUNDING

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (11.18 p.m.): Premier Beattie can more than double his department staffing levels, but critical areas requiring doctors, nurses and other allied health resources are left struggling while sick people wait longer for care. The Premier uses the taxpayers' purse to fund his PR machine; the hospitals are left wanting. I think that the Beattie government has its priorities wrong and that it is not very smart.

For example, at Cairns Base Hospital, after public protests expressing grave concerns about bed shortages and cancelled surgery as well as other resourcing issues, the Health Department sent in one of its bureaucrats to manage the fallout with an internal review. There was a lot of scepticism about the independence of this review, and since the report's results became public recently, that scepticism has proved to be justified. The internal Queensland Health review tries to sell the line that the hospital is overfunded by \$4 million or, in bureaucracy speak, that it has a \$4.143 million 'inefficiency quantum'. This is an insult to the medical and nursing staff who are desperate for the funding issues to be addressed in good faith. I call on the Health Minister not to use this atrocious excuse of the Health Department to cut the Cairns Hospital budget or to hamstring the hospital's genuine need for improved funding to overcome some serious issues in the upcoming budget.

What is the department going to propose should be cut to improve so-called inefficiency at Cairns Base Hospital? We can well wonder. I have to ask whether the Health Minister agrees with this Health Department review that the hospital is overfunded by \$4 million or, in bureaucracy speak, is carrying an inefficiency quantum of over \$4 million.

The Nambour Hospital is experiencing dire problems also. A recent Health Department report identified a number of issues in regard to the problems faced by its accident and emergency section. I call on the Health Minister to release this report publicly and to table her response to the issues raised. However, it is public knowledge that the lack of available funded beds at Nambour Hospital is causing problems now, with surgery routinely being cancelled as a result and people waiting longer than they should in accident and emergency before admission. The hospital is running at about 95 per cent occupancy and higher, and winter is looming. Traditionally there is a higher medical caseload in winter. Where are these patients going to go? There is a desperate need to reopen and fund beds.

I call on the Health Minister to address these issues—not to abuse the staff and not to criticise the doctors and the allied staff who are speaking up but to fund these issues, to release these reports publicly and to address the valid concerns that patients are not receiving care as a result of blow-outs in wait times. I have mentioned before so-called surgery on time. People cannot get access to outpatient clinics and the category 3 surgery—

Time expired.