



Speech by

Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard 30 July 2002

DENTAL SERVICES; SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (7.19 p.m.): I rise to speak on several issues. First, I note the meltdown in the public health system which has been compounded in recent times with the indemnity crisis. We are seeing a range of health issues for which people are unable to receive timely treatment. This is causing a great deal of distress. This is something that has not been addressed by the state government to date. We are getting calls from people who have found that they are not getting access to surgery or are having their appointments cut.

I draw the attention of the House to an issue in my own electorate with regard to oral health. Wait times for people of low income, who in many cases have no other access to dental services, are blowing out. There are literally thousands on the waiting list for dental services on the Sunshine Coast. At Kawana people have to wait 3.5 years. At Noosa the wait is three years. At Nambour it is 26 months and at Caloundra it is two and a half years. In fact, in Caloundra alone I understand that there are around 3,000 people on the waitlist.

Let us look at the oral health situation with regard to children. It is interesting. The child oral health program has existed in Queensland for decades. The excuse the Health Minister keeps dragging out in regard to poor funding for the adult services cannot be stretched to cover the oral health of children. In fact, the state government has lowered its targets for the number of schoolchildren who will receive oral health visits. People are suffering as they wait in order to get these services, but it concerns me that children are not receiving preventative services and the targets have been lowered. This is unacceptable. The problem needs to be addressed. I call on the Health Minister to address the situation for literally thousands of people just on the Sunshine Coast.

I raise the issue of the sexual assault service on the Sunshine Coast. I have facilitated meetings with GPs, the police and the service itself. I support their call for a 24-hour service. The Sunshine Coast has a huge population base. There is no 24-hour service. There must be. Despite the best efforts of those involved to date, there is no funding to provide this. We have the terrible situation whereby if a woman is raped and she approaches police, it may take up to seven or eight hours before she has been through the process of having interviews and specimens taken. The lack of coordination with other ancillary services to provide support to that woman in that situation is really quite appalling. We really need to see that service funded on a 24-hour basis, not just offered within office hours. There needs to be better coordination to assist those people, particularly if they decide to go through the court process.

Time expired.