



Speech by

**CHRIS CUMMINS**

**MEMBER FOR KAWANA**

Hansard 15 October 2003

### **HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr CUMMINS** (Kawana—ALP) (3.19 p.m.): The Health Legislation Amendment Bill before us removes from the Dental Practitioners Registration Regulation 2001 the restriction on employment of dental therapists to the public sector. Dental therapists may now choose to work in either the public or the private sector, which will allow greater flexibility, career development prospects and financial rewards for dental therapists. I, like many members, have been contacted by both dentists and dental therapists asking me to outline the relevant issues they have and their concerns. I thank all of them for their input.

Last week in this House I commended the excellent community-minded people who make up the Sunshine Coast Health Services Foundation. Sadly, I misspelt the names of some of the board members. I wish to apologise to Grahame Colley, Greg Fahey, Natasha Read, Noel Wareham, Peter Lang, a Mix FM announcer, and Peter Conley. Peter is a valuable part of the group but not a board member. I did get some of the board members' names correct, but I trust that now I have got all of the names correct for the public record.

Recently I attended a community forum in Caloundra at which local residents raised concerns about health issues relating to our hospitals and services on the Sunshine Coast. What amazed many in attendance was that one Liberal candidate for the next state election claimed that one of his full-time staffers was forced to show up too early in the day at a free Queensland dental health clinic for treatment. I understand that about 53 per cent of Queenslanders are eligible for free dental care, but surely a receptionist for a professional, whether it be a solicitor or an accountant, if being paid a full-time award rate, should be able to afford their own private dentist. I sincerely hope that we are not hearing Liberal lies this far out from the election.

I think this Caloundra forum was the first time I had heard the shadow spokesperson publicly acknowledge what a poor job the feds are doing by underfunding in various areas and creating unnecessary red tape and duplication. Of course, the state opposition claims that it will insist on less red tape but more lists to be collated and more records kept.

In closing, I must assure the House that one of the biggest issues that residents on the Sunshine Coast raise with me is when the opposition will bring forward for debate the motion that was given notice of in this House on 15 May, which states in part—

That, following support for Taiwan's participation as an observer in the World Health Organization—

I sincerely look forward to this debate, because many cynics have implied that this was the opposition's way of trying to excuse the shadow spokesperson for failing to be present on the last occasion health legislation was debated in this House. I know that it will be at the top of the opposition's list of motions to be brought forward for debate prior to the next state election.

**Miss SIMPSON:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. That legislation was represented by the opposition officially.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Mickel): Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr CUMMINS:** I am very glad that the member has raised that point of order. Obviously that motion will be moved for debate with much haste. I will put my name on the speakers list for that debate, which I trust will occur in coming weeks—hopefully before Christmas.

I commend the minister and her staffers for the excellent work they do. I commend the hospitals and health workers on the Sunshine Coast for the excellent work they do. I commend the federal

government on acknowledging that Kay Patterson was a dud minister and on removing her from that area. I hope that the incoming minister does not just try to put off the issues for another 12 months, until the federal election is out of the way, because people out there are genuinely hurting as the federal government tries to make the Australian system similar to the American system, where only the rich can afford health care. Australians do not want that type of health system. They want to ensure that not only the rich but also the poor and others can afford good health. I commend the minister and her department and I fully support the bill.