



Speech by

Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard 9 September 2003

RADIATION THERAPY

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (11.23 p.m.): I want to draw the attention of the House to a petition that I am tabling this week with regard to the need for public access to radiation therapy on the Sunshine Coast. This petition has about 5,000 signatories. It is a very strong message to this government that there is a need and strong support in our community for the provision of this essential cancer service.

Currently, according to Queensland Health figures, about 800 people travel to Brisbane each year for radiation therapy in order to save their lives due to the cancer that they are facing. That is a huge number of people who have to leave what is a significant region to receive that treatment in Brisbane. It is hard enough if people have somebody who is able to drive them to make that trip and go through successive weeks of treatment, but if they rely upon public transport it is agony. I talk to people who have been through it. It is absolute agony. Not only do they have the difficulty of feeling unwell with the treatment, but then they are put on a bus or a train and then have to come home at the end of the day and do that again over a number of weeks. That cannot be seen as being in their best interests healthwise. There is a public need. There is a definite body of people to justify public access to radiation therapy on the Sunshine Coast. This is what this petition is about.

Currently there is a private provider at Nambour. I believe that there is an immediate opportunity for government to purchase public access for patients at that facility to ensure that public patients do receive treatment locally. It is interesting that with the disasters in radiation therapy and the planning of cancer services in Queensland it got to the stage where people were having to wait up to 15 weeks for radiation therapy in Townsville. As a desperate measure the government started to bring some people from Townsville down to the Nambour private facility. Why can this government not provide access to other public patients at that facility in the interim towards having permanent access to radiation therapy on the Sunshine Coast? It needs to happen. It is in the best interests of patients.

I want to commend Lucy Rowson, who collected this petition, and the many people who have supported her. This petition is the voice of the people, but Queensland Health's own statistics justify access to public radiation therapy on the Sunshine Coast. We urge this government to have compassion, to get its priorities right and to provide access to patients on the Sunshine Coast with proper planning and provision of those essential health services. It is in the best interests of people's health and the region. I commend this petition to the House. I also want to raise another issue.

Time expired.