



Speech by

JEFF SEENEY

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

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DENTAL SERVICES, CALLIDE ELECTORATE

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (7.13 p.m.): Tonight I want to bring to the attention of this parliament a totally unacceptable situation that exists within my electorate in the community of Biloela. In common with most communities, we have seen the health services that are available to us in Biloela deteriorate over time with the continuing administration of this Labor government. In particular, the dental services that are available in Biloela at the moment are simply unacceptable by anybody's standards. A number of constituents have approached me with concerns about a three-year waiting list. They are being asked to wait three years for treatment in the public dental system in their own community.

Worse than that is the fact that Queensland Health has not been able to provide a permanent dentist for the dental clinic in Biloela for quite some time. We have had the ridiculous situation where casual dentists have been appointed on an irregular and unpredictable basis. So not only are people being asked to wait for three years for any sort of procedural treatment, those people who are faced with emergency situations—painful situations—cannot be confident that they are going to get treatment at the dental clinic because they never know whether there is going to be a dentist there or not. It is simply an unacceptable situation that has gone on for far too long. I have written to the Minister for Health about this issue and received the standard reassuring letter with all the bureaucratic gobbledegook that means nothing, and I am sure that all members on this side of the House have received similar letters when they have made complaints to the Health Minister about the lack of health services.

The situation is probably no better than it is in a range of other areas right across the state. Some of my constituents go to other centres such as Bundaberg seeking dental services. They tell me that the waiting list there for procedures is three years as well, but at least in those centres they are able to receive the type of emergency treatment that is not available in the Biloela community at the moment. The very basic service that the government should be able to provide is to be able to relieve pain and critical situations when they occur. The health issue is the biggest issue facing constituents right across Queensland.

It is a core responsibility of the state government to provide adequate health services. It is something that Queensland governments have always been proud of—that is, being able to provide a free, reliable and appropriate health system to Queenslanders. It is something that generations of Queenslanders have grown up with. It is something that this government is failing miserably to maintain. It is not something that it has had to provide. All it had to do was maintain the service that was already there, and it has failed miserably to do that. That failure is demonstrated by the complete lack of dental services in the community that I represent in Biloela.