



Speech by

LEX BELL, MP

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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LOW-CARE AGED FACILITY, GOLD COAST

Mr BELL (Surfers Paradise—Ind) (10.27 a.m.): It is said that timing is everything in politics and it is well known that we are now at a time leading up to an election. About a year ago I presented to this House 27,000 signatures requesting the establishment of the state government run low-care aged facility on the Gold Coast. We have many fine private and church facilities with, of course, not enough beds for the burgeoning population. But for most of these, except for a very small percentage prescribed by government regulation, a large up-front payment of capital is required by those seeking beds. There are very few facilities for those who do not have the capital but who wish to access a low-care aged facility bed.

I am no particular friend of the federal government. Indeed, the Santo Santoro faction of the Liberal Party is endeavouring to unseat me in the seat of Surfers Paradise. But in fairness to the local federal members, I must say that I have been given great encouragement. If the state government put in an application for a low-care aged facility on the Gold Coast, it would get a licence with ongoing per capita operating funding.

There is a community expectation on this matter. The minister's response to the petition was that the government has no plans at this stage for such a facility on the Gold Coast. I am encouraged by the qualification 'at this stage'. Of course, since the minister's response there have been great changes to St Vincent's Hospital at Robina. I do not know how the beds are being fully utilised at the moment, but there may well be an opportunity to have an aged care facility included there. I believe that there is a community expectation—indeed, I know that there is a community expectation—in the lead-up to the next election that the government will find some money and will be prepared to make an application in its name for a government run low-care aged facility.