



Speech by

LINDY NELSON-CARR

MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA

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APPROPRIATION BILLS—ESTIMATES COMMITTEE D

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (5.21 p.m.): I am very proud to belong to a government that has continued to deliver on record health budgets. I would be absolutely stunned to have a look at the research that the member for Maroochydore refers to. This is the very first time that a government has been as open and as accountable as this government has. We publish our figures, which is more than I can say for the opposition. Importantly, we publish lists hospital by hospital across the state. That has never been done by the coalition. The coalition has never had the nerve to do it. Why are the members of the coalition jumping up and down the way they are now? The member for Maroochydore's behaviour at the estimates was nothing short of a disgrace.

Mrs EDMOND: Again.

Ms NELSON-CARR: Again, yes—the same old same old.

I am pleased to report that the published June quarter waiting list report records the shortest waiting times ever for urgent and semi-urgent elective surgery in this state. I am particularly proud to be Parliamentary Secretary to Australia's longest serving and best Health Minister.

A government member: And you do a good job, too.

Ms NELSON-CARR: I thank the member.

Two weeks ago in Perth all the other state and territory health ministers voted unanimously to have the Queensland Health Minister chair the most crucial meeting of ministers that has been held for five years. This was the meeting that considered and debated the inadequacy of the Commonwealth offer for the next health care agreement.

Before I turn to the health care agreement, I would like to mention some of the budget highlights for Townsville because it is particularly dear to me. They include oncology services and cancer care, \$1.3 million; renal dialysis, \$2 million to meet the demand; cardiac services, \$500,000; emergency department, \$300,000; intensive care services, \$900,000; \$385,000 to staff a 10-bed psychogeriatric unit to be constructed next year as part of the Townsville Nursing Home redevelopment; \$180,000 for the Townsville Hospital rehab program for older persons—and the total funds for that service are \$680,000; and \$210,000 to continue the development of a northern zone spinal rehabilitation service in Townsville. It is a pretty great record.

Recurrent funding of \$150,000 will also be allocated to employ a director of renal medicine to allow more extensive outreach services and a full-time medical officer in endocrinology. Community Health Services in Townsville and Thuringowa will receive \$2.6 million this year for the redevelopment of both the Kirwan and North Ward sites. There are additional allocations this year for the redevelopment of the Townsville Nursing Home at Kirwan. The minister also announced that the district would receive replacement health technology equipment valued at approximately \$3.5 million for 2003-04.

These achievements are to be commended. If they are compared to the dishonest campaign by federal members such as Peter Lindsay, who argued for Townsville Hospital to receive less money, this would be the net effect of Queensland signing up to a deal that the Prime Minister confirms will take \$160 million away from Queensland hospitals. Mr Lindsay is in denial and I have a table that shows the decline in bulk-billing for his electorate. I am happy to table that.

Leave granted.

Ms NELSON-CARR: I spoke in this House yesterday about the new overseas trained GPs supposedly purloined by the member for Herbert to take the heat out of the GP shortage debacle. In fact, GPs already working in Townsville have applied for provider numbers for overseas trained doctors and they have been refused. It gets worse. These new doctors are competing with the not-for-profit division of general practice pilot after hours service. The division justifiably claims the future viability of this practice is now being threatened.

The AMA in Townsville blames the decline in bulk-billing on the low rate of Medicare rebate for bulk-billed services. Townsville is classified as a RAMA 2 city for rebate purposes, making doctors in Townsville eligible for the \$15,000 incentive payment if they bulk-bill more than 75 per cent under Labor's Medicare package. This payment is per doctor and paid monthly, but there is a very strong argument for increasing the incentive to bulk-bill in Townsville to \$22,500 for bulk-billing 70 per cent of patients.

Cairns is a RAMA 3 regional city and receives this incentive but does not have the same problems as Townsville. The rhetoric from the member for Herbert has clouded his capacity to lobby his government to give Townsville what it deserves. His insistence on concentrating on state issues is a ruse to conceal his inadequate federal representation. There is an overall shortage of GPs in Herbert, so competitive pressures on doctors to bulk-bill do not exist. The net effect of this is the increase in out-of-pocket expenses of about \$16 and more to see a GP. The doctor-patient ratio is also significantly increased in Herbert. We have gone from one GP per around 1,000 patients in 1996 to one GP per almost 1,500 patients. The member for Herbert should be ashamed of himself.

Time expired.