



Speech by

John-Paul Langbroek

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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HEALTH SERVICES

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (6.13 p.m.): I rise tonight to speak on this very important motion and speak out at the outrageous neglect of the Australian Labor Party and its contempt for the residents of Queensland. I also condemn the cynical amendment moved by the minister and note that it is only slightly less self-congratulatory than the one earlier this year about the electricity industry, and wasn't that well received by the media and the public!

The major problem with Queensland hospitals is that there are simply not enough resources to go around. These resources could be beds, nurses or medical supplies. The severe shortages in all of these can be directly attributed to the Queensland Labor government, and no amount of political acrobatics and political spin can change that fact.

Let me run through some of these facts—facts outlined in the federal Health Department's report into the state of public hospitals. The report, entitled the *State of our public hospitals June 2004*, gives comparisons between the state health systems in this country and ranks them according to a number of key criteria.

Fact 1. Page 7 of the report shows that the Queensland Labor government presides over the lowest public hospital recurrent expenditure per person of any state in Australia—the lowest, and a long way below the national average. According to the report, Queensland sits at \$322 per person, which is almost \$50 per person below the national average of \$371. This money goes to paying the things people would normally expect—medicine and infrastructure. However, the major expense when a patient visits hospital is nursing, contributing 26 per cent of the average cost of a hospital visit. If Queensland is spending 13 per cent less than the national average and 15 per cent less than the larger southern states, it follows that there will be problems with the number of nurses one can have on the hospital floor and the number of beds one can have operational in the hospitals.

Fact 2. Page 7 of the report also outlines that Queensland is sixth out of the eight states or territories when looking at the number of patients seen by emergency departments in the recommended time. At 71 per cent, this means that three in 10 people are not seen in the recommended period of time by emergency departments. Another aspect of this snapshot that I found very interesting was that Queensland has three of the top 10 busiest hospitals in the nation. One of those hospitals, coming in at No. 10, is the Gold Coast Hospital. In fact, on the list of the top 10 busiest hospitals the Gold Coast Hospital is the only hospital not in a metropolitan area. I mentioned before that the Australian Labor Party in this state shows contempt for the people of Queensland on the issue of health. If that is true, then they serve a cocktail of contempt and reckless abandon to the people of the Gold Coast and the Gold Coast Hospital.

Last week the *Gold Coast Bulletin* did a series on failings of the Queensland government when it comes to the resources given to the Gold Coast Hospital. The Premier came down and lauded the *Gold Coast Bulletin* about a month ago at the opening of its new press, so I take as a given that, therefore, it is the most influential regional paper in the country. The government cannot have it both ways.

The first part dealt with a Queenslander being told they would be better off driving themselves to Lismore—more than an hour over the border—to go to a hospital. This is because all of the hospitals

between Brisbane and the Tweed were on capacity alert and a bypass for all ambulances. The following day came the story of Sylvia Hogan who, like many other Queenslanders, realised first-hand the traumas in our state hospitals as her daughter-in-law had to wait in incredible agony for a bed at the Gold Coast Hospital. I said in a recent speech that I regularly hear sentiments from patients at the Gold Coast Hospital to the effect that the staff are wonderful but that they are underresourced and there are not enough of them. Stories like that of Ms Hogan illustrate this point indelibly.

On the weekend we heard the story of Nicole Casey, who was turned away for the second time in a month for a gall bladder operation that would relieve her of her pain and agony. Remember, this is the 10th busiest of the 750 public hospitals in Australia and the largest regional hospital in the nation, yet there are people such as Nicole Casey who are turned away twice in the same month. It makes one wonder what the situation is like at the major Brisbane hospitals as well. I can inform the minister and the Premier that Nicole Casey, Sylvia Hogan and the person told to go to Lismore are not stand-alone cases. However, they represent the line on the heart monitor measuring the health of Queensland Health, and it is in danger of flat-lining.

My esteemed colleagues have proven this evening that hospital bypasses, staff shortages and beds with no nurses are the problem, and it is a problem caused by this government. We have given the government the solution—that is, investing the unbudgeted \$130 million in GST receipts and putting it into the public health system. It is only by doing this that the government will begin to look after the health of Queenslanders.

In her speech the member for Bundamba said that bulk-billing GPs were the problem that the A and E departments face. However, as my colleagues have mentioned, only between five per cent and 15 per cent of patients in A and Es are patients who can be treated by GPs. When they are treated, they are not the patients who contribute to access blocks. Moreover, only a federal coalition government will deliver more GPs, contrary to the Australian Labor Party's impractical plan for Australia's health system.

Time expired.