



Speech by

Michael Choi

MEMBER FOR CAPALABA

Hansard Thursday, 13 May 2004

HEALTH SYSTEM

Mr CHOI (Capalaba—ALP) (6.56 p.m.): I first of all acknowledge in the gallery Councillor Helen Murray from the Redlands Shire Council. I welcome her and her husband, as well as her party, on their visit to the Queensland parliament. I note that Councillor Murray is a very strong advocate for her community in the Redlands shire.

I stand in the chamber today with continued disgust over how the Howard government has absolutely decimated the Australian health system. Never did I believe Australia would one day become a country where a visit to the local doctor would be based on the next payday or when there is any credit left in the credit card.

I know that this issue has been brought to parliament by many members on many occasions, but it is a matter that simply cannot be ignored. Some 28 years ago when I first migrated to this country my father took me to my first public school. I have mentioned in this House before that I refused to go in because I thought it would be very expensive. My father told me it was free. I was injured during a football game and my father took me to my first public hospital visit in this country and I refused to go in because I thought it would be very expensive. My father told me once again that hospital care was free. That was 28 years ago. My education was free and my health care was free. Twenty-eight years later the constituents I represent have to pay for medical care and have to pay for education. Something must be done by the federal government to make good our medical system and something must be done now.

Medical treatment is not a luxury; it is a basic right and should be expected by each and every Australian, and it should be delivered to each and every Australian. I have spoken with many people on New Start allowances. They now simply wait until they get over their flu or sickness as they cannot afford a visit to their local GP. In an instance where a family of five is infected with the common cold, a trip to the doctor can rack up \$100 in medical expenses, and that is before medication. Some parents I have spoken to over this issue have taken their children to the GP for the necessary treatment but are unable to afford treatment for themselves. I ask: is this the country we want it to be?

Another of my constituents was nearly in tears when she described how she lost her father in England to TB as her family was unable to afford the medication needed to bring him back to good health and that is why she migrated to this country. We need to think of our children and our future. We need to think of our age pensioners to whom we owe so much. We need to think of our families and friends. We will not support a federal government that disregards the people who elected them. We will not support a federal government that is destroying the values and principles that once made Australia the envy of the world. We will not support the continued destruction by the Howard government of Medicare. I will continue to take up this issue with the federal government on behalf of the people in Capalaba. The Howard government must be taken to task on this issue.