



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

Hansard Wednesday, 1 September 2004

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION AND AUDIT (PERFORMANCE AUDIT OF HEALTH DEPARTMENT) AMENDMENT BILL

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (7.41 p.m.): I rise to support the motion moved by the shadow health minister to amend the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977 to enable annual independent auditing of the operational performance of the state Health Department. It is time to take a long, hard look at the system which is responsible for delivering basic services to our Queensland residents. The people of Queensland are still waiting for the government to independently audit the public health care system, as it promised it would if re-elected. One patient in my electorate was referred to a pain relief clinic in 1997. To the best of my knowledge, this person has still not been treated. This is not good enough. Empty promises made by Mr Beattie are leaving sick Queenslanders to suffer for months, sometimes years, without relief.

It has also become increasingly obvious that the data provided by the state Health Department is somewhat misleading. Numbers are being manipulated in order to portray a much more desirable outcome for the department. What does it have to hide? Is it the length of hospital waiting lists? Is it the way in which it prioritises patients according to the pain level instead of mental and physical ailments? Or is it just that it is afraid to show state parliament that it really is not providing the service it promised?

The government needs to be able to accept some constructive criticism of a system that just is not working. I have a constituent in my electorate who has to wait 18 months just for a test. In the meantime, she is in and out of hospital being treated for the excruciating pain associated with her condition. Would it not make more sense to schedule the necessary surgery and save the state the expense of regularly hospitalising this person to manage the pain? These are people's lives we are dealing with. When someone is constantly in pain, their quality of life is diminished greatly. I think it is cruel that, because of poor financial management on the government's behalf, these people continue to suffer.

It has been my experience when travelling the Charters Towers electorate that the hospital staff are hardworking, caring and conscientious. We need to support these people and provide them with the necessary resources to do their jobs effectively and to shorten the waiting lists. I commend this bill to the House.