



Speech by

Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard Thursday, 10 March 2005

CANCER TREATMENT SERVICES

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (10.28 am): Sunshine Coast cancer patients are waiting months for diagnosis and treatment in the public system. This is putting lives at risk due to lengthy delays. While the state Beattie government praises itself for the health system, cancer patients are waiting up to three months for diagnosis and treatment of aggressive cancers. I ask honourable members to listen to the tragedy of this comment from a constituent. She said—

If I had received prompt and efficient service in the first place I would not have been caught up in the supposed unexpected large number of breast cancer patients.

This was not unexpected. We have warned about the problems in the cancer treatment area. I am concerned that patients are paying for this government's ineptitude. My constituent has been told by her surgeon that she will have to wait four to six weeks to have a mastectomy to address an aggressive cancer. However, due to delays in the Queensland health system for initial diagnosis the wait time in fact is far longer. The total wait time for this lady's treatment is actually nearly three months. This is a lady who has had cancer before and had symptoms.

This delay was not due to her actions but owing to the time it took to receive an appointment at BreastScreen Queensland for a mammogram and the subsequent wait time to see specialist doctors for a biopsy, ultrasound and consideration of surgery in the public health system. Since discovering the lump, she estimates that it has doubled in size and is about five centimetres in diameter. As she has a history of breast cancer, being told that she had to wait this long for surgery has distressed her. But she is not alone. I understand that her GP is horrified and has urged her to go privately rather than wait too long. I understand that other women have been put through this distress of the uncertainty of when they would receive timely and appropriate attention to this issue. I understand that the Sunshine Coast Health District is trying to get these people in for surgery earlier, but it highlights that there is a problem in the system when those who are most vulnerable, not with a minor condition but a life-threatening condition, are unable to get timely diagnosis and treatment.

Time expired.