



Speech by

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DENTISTRY AND ORAL HEALTH GUILD; GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY DENTAL SCHOOL

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (10.04 pm): I take this opportunity to inform the House of a recent launch that I attended on the Gold Coast. On 31 March, I attended the launch of the Dentistry and Oral Health Guild. The guild is chaired by a friend and colleague of mine, oral surgeon Gerry Thurnwald. It aims to promote and support the research activity of the Griffith University School of Dentistry and Oral Care.

This was a really fantastic networking event. It saw the coming together of the local profession with academics and students at the Griffith University dental school to discuss the profession and its needs for the future, and to support the Griffith University dental school. The vice-chancellor of the university, Ian O'Connor, the dean of the dental school, Professor Newell Johnson, and senior staff were present, among them the former federal member for Ryan, Leonie Short.

To the amazement of many of my fellow practitioners, dentists are bemused at the current obstacles faced by the dental school in light of the Beattie government's continued neglect of Queensland's health system and, consequently, the oral care sector within it. They are bemused by the fact that Queensland Health will not enter into a service agreement with the school. Queensland Health does not want to pay the university's dental school what it will cost the university to run a clinic that will relieve the overburdened public dental health system.

This is the 'commitment' of a government which told us only today in question time that it really is fixing our health system. I ask: if that is the case, why will it not enter into a service agreement with the Griffith University dental school? Without a service agreement, final-year students in dentistry and dental therapy are unable to treat eligible children and adults on the Gold Coast who need dental care. This is an unacceptable situation when current public sector waiting lists vary from two to five years.

I have been contacted by several third-year students at the university who cannot understand why they cannot help waiting patients today; honestly, neither can I. They are Lyndall Jarimenous, Tiffany Jamieson, Viola Laurel, Kim Adams and Cheryl-Ann Haines. I am happy to table their letters to me, asking for my help. I commend them for their efforts and for their initiative.

It is a win-win situation for Queensland. Queensland's future dentists, dental therapists and hygienists gain clinical skills and competence in a range of dental procedures, while patients on waiting lists receive the urgent treatment for which they have been waiting. In fact, this is how we treated patients at the University of Queensland dental school, often sourced from the dental hospital next door in Turbot Street.

We have willing practitioners and willing patients but no funding to secure a service agreement. The government needs to engage these people. By not engaging these eager practitioners to assist in addressing the shortage of dentists in Queensland, the government is being hypocritical after it welcomed the dental school only a year ago with fireworks and balloons.

I urge the government, out of frustration—as do most of the dental professionals who were at the guild's launch, as does the dean of the dental school, as do the students, and as do the Queenslanders on

the enormous dental waiting lists—to seize this opportunity to address the shortage of dentists, dental therapists and hygienists in Queensland and to secure a fair and equitable service agreement with Griffith University as soon as possible. The federal government funded the dental school. I now call on the Queensland government to help fund the patients that could be serviced by it.