



Speech by

## Hon. Nita Cunningham

MEMBER FOR BUNDABERG

Hansard Friday, 9 June 2006

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### BUNDABERG BASE HOSPITAL

**Hon. NITA CUNNINGHAM** (Bundaberg—ALP) (5.11 pm): I want to place on record that, while our Bundaberg Base Hospital continues to be criticised by the opposition, it is indeed progressing very well. A report I received on 9 May shows that our hospital has gained 11 new medical staff since January, and I believe the Premier gained another two doctors for Bundaberg during his recent visit to the UK. Our department of emergency medicine remains fully staffed, without the shortages being experienced in some other hospitals—private as well as public. Our obstetrics service has gone from strength to strength. In fact, just recently our base hospital took over delivery of all births in Bundaberg, Burnett and outlying areas at very short notice following the closure of the private hospital's maternity ward. This transition, with less than two weeks warning, was handled incredibly well by our team of obstetricians and some 37 midwives.

Major orthopaedic surgery recommenced in April and, with the return of Dr Chaudry this month to continue working with Dr Robinson, we are hoping to significantly reduce our waiting lists in non-urgent category 3 orthopaedics in coming months. The adult in-patient mental health service is still awaiting the arrival of its new director, whose application is in the hands of the Royal Australasian College of Psychiatrists—not the government—and his commencement date is dependent on that college's very slow processes. However, because we hear so much in Bundaberg about our mental health unit being closed, I stress that it is only the adult in-patient service that is closed. All other mental health services have continued to operate.

New telemetry equipment has been installed this quarter, enabling patients who present with chest pain to be monitored by ICU staff from admission. The new CT scanner is due to arrive within weeks, and work on purchasing our new computerised radiography equipment is well underway, enabling X-rays to be largely a thing of the past as all radiography images become digital. Recruitment continues very strongly, and I am advised that our Bundaberg Base Hospital expects to be fully staffed within weeks, which will be an amazing result when there is a national and, in some specialties, an international shortage of medical staff—both private and public. This week's budget will bring even more staff, equipment, facilities and the extra services identified in my speech earlier today.

On another bright note, our renal clinic has just celebrated its 10th birthday. Prior to its establishment, patients had to travel to Rockhampton and Nambour for dialysis. But after intense lobbying, our first four chairs were announced by the health minister in the Goss government—the Hon. Peter Beattie—and during his terms as Premier our renal unit has grown to now have 13 chairs. Morale is certainly rising in our hospital. Many patients and their families are glowing in their praise of the treatment they are receiving. To all of our hospital staff, I say well done.