



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Tuesday, 7 March 2006

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Health Action Plan

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.47 am): The national doctor shortage is placing extreme pressure on all states. As members would have seen, the AMA says that it has led to deaths in New South Wales emergency departments and the closure of theatre services at a local hospital and 14 maternity or obstetric services in Victoria since 2002. That is why we have come up with a plan. Our \$6.4 billion health action plan is helping to build the best public health system in Australia. I announced the health action plan in October last year as part of our mini-budget, which contained almost \$6.4 billion in extra funding for health in just over five years. No state or territory government in the history of Australia has made such a massive commitment to ensuring the health and wellbeing of its residents.

The health action plan is pumping this money directly into our health system to provide more doctors, and we are trying to recruit 300 of those over the next 18 months; more nurses, and we are trying to recruit 500 of those; and more allied health staff, and we are trying to recruit 400 of those. It will also cut waiting lists, maintain and improve our hospitals and buy new technology and equipment that will help save lives. Members will remember the health action plan. It includes money for cancer services, emergency departments, elective surgery, intensive care units, cardiac services, mental health services and of course money for workforce training. It also enabled us to fund an initial extra \$733 million for pay increases for doctors followed by another \$272 million over three years in increased pay and allowances to attract senior doctors to the system. The health action plan has also enabled us to offer the 22,000 nurses employed by Queensland Health a new enterprise agreement, which includes a 25 per cent pay rise worth almost \$1 billion. This offer is designed to ensure that our hardworking, highly skilled nurses and those employed by the Mater Public Hospital are justly rewarded and attract more nurses into the system.

The health action plan aims to recruit around 1,200 additional staff to the public health system during the next 18 months. I want to acknowledge the extraordinary dedication of Queensland Health's health workers. We have a plan and we are determined to deliver on that plan to improve health services. I seek leave to incorporate more details of the plan in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

As I said the health action plan aims to recruit around 1,200 additional staff to the public health system during the next 18 months, including 300 doctors, 500 nurses and 400 allied health professionals, such as physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech pathologists.

We also put in place a 10-point strategy to help deal with the pressure on our emergency departments which includes \$3 million to provide solutions to access block and a new interstate and international recruitment campaign.

We have also been successful in persuading the Council of Australian Governments to agree to extra doctor training places at universities.

And the council also agreed to establish a national accreditation scheme for overseas-trained doctors which will help us recruit more doctors and get them into the system quicker.