



Speech by

Peter Wellington

MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

Hansard Wednesday, 1 November 2006

HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (12.08 pm): I rise to participate in the debate on the Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2006. I note that this is a genuine attempt by our health minister to try to get more qualified doctors, more qualified nurses and more qualified dentists and health professionals to come to Queensland to try to relieve the enormous pressure that our medical people are currently under at the moment.

The minister certainly needs to be congratulated on his attempts to try to get more professionally medically trained people to come to work in Queensland. I also believe that the federal government has a very important role to play and cannot just simply pass the buck to the state government. In the past federal governments have financially supported the provision of dental services in the states. We saw significant benefits from a previous federal government that put money on the table to help respond to the dental problems that we have in Queensland. I hope that a future federal government will also put money on the table to assist Queensland to improve its delivery of dental services.

I would like to take a few moments of everyone's time to share with them some concerns that I have about Nambour Hospital. Recently Nambour Hospital saw a significant increase in the number of health professionals. Unfortunately, there is a major problem with the provision of adequate car parking space for staff at Nambour Hospital. More importantly, there is a major problem for people who want to visit their loved ones who are patients at the Nambour Hospital. Many years ago the Maroochy Shire Council spent ratepayers' money on purchasing a very significant parcel of land right beside the Nambour Hospital to, can I say, help out Queensland Health. At the time there was an acknowledgement—and it had been acknowledged for many years—that there was not adequate car parking available at Nambour Hospital.

The reality is that time has moved on and the current council has indicated that it is exploring the opportunity of selling this very important and strategically located parcel of land. I understand that negotiations have been ongoing for some time. I thank the minister for the recent meeting that we had with him and his senior departmental staff to try to see if we can move forward on this very difficult issue of providing adequate car parking for staff and visitors to patients at Nambour Hospital. I really worry that, if an agreement is not able to be reached between the state government and the Maroochy Shire Council and a proposal cannot be made in the near future for an immediate solution to providing additional car parking spaces for our staff and the loved ones of patients at the Nambour Hospital, the Maroochy Shire Council will say, 'Sorry, we can't reach an agreement. The land is now on the open market for sale.' I dread to think what will happen if that very important and strategically located parcel of land is sold off by the Maroochy Shire Council and is no longer available to help Queensland Health provide the important car parking spaces that that land provides currently.

On earlier occasions I have stood in this chamber and said that I believe that the state government, just like every other businessperson in Queensland, has a responsibility to provide adequate parking. It should not be up to local councils to have to provide parking around schools or hospitals. We were very fortunate that a previous Maroochy Shire Council was prepared to spend ratepayers' money to purchase land for car parking. I understand that at the time there was also financial support from the then state

government to buy this very strategically located parcel of land. So I use this opportunity to urge the minister to have the department urgently consider the situation and try to come forward with a practical solution to the parking problems that exist at Nambour Hospital. Staff want to come and work at Nambour Hospital. There has been a significant increase in the number of professionals coming to work at Nambour Hospital. That has really accentuated the problem.

Unfortunately, many staff are now receiving parking fines because of the difficulties involved in parking for the duration of their shift. In the past, many staff would duck out at two-hourly intervals and move their cars. I understand now that the car parking requirement in the Maroochy shire is that it is no longer possible for those people to undertake that short manoeuvre.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): Order! I have been fairly lenient this afternoon, but I ask that you return to the provisions of the bill before the House.

Mr WELLINGTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, thank you for your tolerance. The minister is aware of my sentiments and those of my constituents. I am certainly very keen to have a possible resolution to the problem before Christmas. I am due to have a meeting with the staff next week.

The Nambour Hospital staff do a wonderful job. I commend the minister for his initiative to try to get more professional health workers to come and work in the many hospitals and dental facilities in Queensland. I hope in the minister's response he can also comment on the reasons overseas nurses who have applied for registration have experienced significant delays in trying to have their applications processed. I commend the bill to the House. I look forward to it proceeding to the consideration in detail stage.