



Speech by

Robert Messenger

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Hansard Tuesday, 28 February 2006

BUNDABERG BASE HOSPITAL, MATERNITY UNIT

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (9.09 pm): I recently had a lengthy conversation and discussion with Dr Malcolm Stumer, the former Director of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the Bundaberg Base Hospital, where amongst other concerns he warned me about the dangerous shortage of beds and birthing suites at the maternity unit. I know that this information is information that the Premier, the health minister and Labor members prefer not to hear. This is not their good news. But, according to Dr Stumer, mothers' and their babies' lives are being placed at greater risk because of this medical underresourcing. The facts of the matter are unavoidable and inescapable. No amount of Beattie government spin doctoring will make them go away.

After the recent closure of the private birthing facility at the non-government hospital, all births in Bundaberg must take place at the Bundaberg Base Hospital Maternity Unit. An extra 300 to 350 births per year from the private health system will be transferred to the public system, on top of the already approximately 850 births per year which occur at Bundaberg's maternity unit. This ensures that at least 1,200 births will have to be catered for at the Bundaberg maternity unit. The Beattie government has reduced the number of birthing suites at the Bundaberg Base Hospital from five to three, as well as slashed bed numbers from 48 to 16. It has also closed a dedicated obstetrics operating theatre.

The Premier and his letter writers and spin doctors will describe me as a knocker—someone who is trying to undermine the reputation of the Bundaberg Base Hospital, someone who is making it too difficult for our hospital to recruit doctors and staff. Unfortunately for the families of the Burnett and Bundaberg and the mothers and babies of the Burnett and Bundaberg whose lives are being placed at risk, we have all heard that Labor Party rhetoric before. It was just prior to the 'Dr Death' royal commissions.

I would prefer to bring to this chamber good news. But when respected medical professionals are telling me something is gravely wrong then urgent action needs to take place so that tragedies can be avoided. When fathers, mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers are telling me the saddest of stories, stories of death and near death of their babies, then I will continue to upset this government's day with the truth, the reality, the bad news that Bundaberg Base Hospital is understaffed, underresourced and human lives are unnecessarily placed at risk. Mr Premier, you have forgotten my community. You have forgotten how to be caring and decent. You have forgotten the basics. We want, we demand, more beds, doctors and nurses for our mothers and babies.