



Speech by

Robert Messenger

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Hansard Wednesday, 19 April 2006

BUNDABERG BASE HOSPITAL; PATEL, DR J

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (12.10 pm): For the protection and wellbeing of Patel's victims, I table a number of disturbing documents which I have only recently received. These documents show that this Labor government has improved only three things in Queensland Health: the cover-ups are getting better, the excuses are getting better and the spin is getting better. Nothing has changed. The Premier and his government continue to mismanage Queensland Health and the Bundaberg Hospital crisis.

One of the letters I tabled is a letter from Mr George Pauza, a very highly respected and Queensland government decorated Patel victim. As many members would know, he was the naked farmer who discovered the tilt train accident. He writes—

Nothing in Queensland Health has changed. In fact, as far as the Bundaberg Base Hospital is concerned, it seems that the situation has deteriorated even further, sinking to new depths of cover-ups, deceptions and ineptitudes.

Mr Pauza also says—

Right from the very start of my attempt to get rectifying medical treatment for the problems I suffered at Patel's hands, I was met with obstructive, bullying and coercive behaviour, thinly masked by "we know best—our way or no way" attitudes from BBH.

Mr Pauza, in common with all Patel victims, was guaranteed by this government that he would be able to access the specialist of his choice. That promise was broken. Mr Pauza had to accept the Queensland appointed specialist even while the specialist of his choice was still available.

I also tabled a letter from another former Patel victim, Mr Ian Fleming, a spokesperson for the Bundaberg Patients Support Group, who has cc'ed the documentation to me. It reads—

We the members of the Bundaberg Victims Support Group Inc. call upon the Queensland Government to forthwith announce the immediate and total removal of the Apr 28th 2006 deadline for the registration of Dr Patel patients for the special compensation process. Our primary reason to call on your government to do this, is that according to sworn evidence of Dr Geoff de Lacy to the former Royal Commission, that numerous, perhaps hundreds of former Patel patients are likely to develop complications from Dr Patel treatment for up to 5 years or more to come. We believe it to be a gross injustice to these patients if the April 28th deadline is not to be completely expunged.

Just as this government was shamed into establishing the 'Dr Death' royal commission, it will be shamed into erasing this unjust deadline. I have recently spoken with a number of Patel victims who are about to enter the special process of mediation with the Queensland government. I have serious concerns that the process is flawed and biased in the government's favour. I have concerns that the mediation process is structured in such a way as to minimize the chances of Patel's victims obtaining a fair and just settlement and that it maximizes this government's chances of paying out as little as possible. The reason that I have these fears and concerns is that each victim with whom I have spoken is only being offered by this government the opportunity to take one medical expert report or a joint medico-legal report into the mediation process. I have already tabled a page from a lawyer/client agreement which shows that this government is not prepared to pay the costs of an independent medical expert's assessment.

Patel patients are not being advised that they run the risk of being forced into accepting a settlement which is not fair or just if they do not access at least two truly impartial, independent medico-legal assessments before they enter any mediation. Patel patients are not being advised by this government that they have the right to access an expert medico-legal assessment from a professional of their choice, not a professional who is the first choice of this Queensland government.

The same corrupt Labor health system which hired Patel, covered up for Patel, flew him out of the country and has failed to bring him back is still in control of Queensland. We can expect only three things to improve: the spin, the cover-ups and the excuses. Patel patients are being conned by this government into agreeing to a mediation based compensation that lacks transparency and accountability and is designed to rip them off. Why did this Labor government impose an artificial legal deadline on a special compensation process, which is a gross injustice to Patel victims? If this government is treating Patel victims fairly—

Time expired.