



Speech by

**Jann Stuckey**

**MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN**

Hansard Tuesday, 22 May 2007

---

## **GOLD COAST HOSPITAL, ONCOLOGY SERVICES**

**Mrs STUCKEY** (Currumbin—Lib) (9.47 pm): In December 2005, upon hearing of the staffing crisis at the Gold Coast Hospital, Jackie Morgan went to work as nurse unit manager of the haematology oncology day unit. As a former nurse I understand the dedicated approach nurses and allied health professionals bring to their roles despite working under enormous pressure to provide quality care for terminally ill patients.

After 20 years working in cancer care this modern-day Florence Nightingale reluctantly resigned in March this year after failing to receive any reply from Uschi Schreiber over her concerns at the lack of a full-time medical oncologist. Patients were and still are forced to travel to Brisbane for treatment despite being severely unwell. Distance creates extra paperwork and increases the risk of human error. One patient was given the wrong drug during Jackie's term of employment.

Instead of employing a full-time oncologist or rotating doctors from Brisbane the Beattie government employed three cancer care coordinators at a cost of \$80,000 each per annum. Two opportunities to recruit a medical oncologist have been lost according to Jackie due to inefficient processes of Queensland Health. Jackie recently helped form the Gold Coast Cancer Services Action Group to demand this government provide basic services for cancer sufferers as a priority. A distraught Mrs Burns who lives in the Currumbin electorate wrote the following letter—

At the age of 50 my husband Robert was diagnosed with terminal cancer 16th July, 2004 and tragically lost his fight for life 5th April, 2007.

During his inspirational battle we were to learn of the obstacles we needed to overcome for Robert to achieve a deserved quality of life. As a public out patient in the early stages of treatment we had the financial ability to avail ourselves of the private cancer facilities, such as they are, on the Gold Coast.

But once becoming a Public Inpatient in December 2006 these services were no longer offered. Robert's need for continuing radiation treatments was to be provided in Brisbane with a two week waiting list.

Am I to understand that when one is diagnosed terminally ill, one should not expect ongoing treatment? Should Robert have accepted his fate and not be given the chance to spend longer with us? How in all conscience can your Health Department allow this appalling lack of cancer facilities to continue in the ever increasing population of the Gold Coast?

An email of complaint to Mr Robertson was answered on 24th April, promising a detailed response when 'advice in relation to this matter' was received. No reply has been forthcoming, highlighting the lack of compassion or concern from the Minister.

My darling Robert's passing has brought the plight of other patients to the attention of our many acquaintances and your Government's lack of attention will not go unnoticed.

Sadly, little has changed since thousands of concerned Gold Coast residents took to the streets in 1998 disgusted at underfunding and poor resources of our public hospital. Members opposite and especially those from the Gold Coast should hang their heads in shame, but instead they arrogantly gloat of Beattie's achievements. One year ago I stood in this House to plead the case of Kate Saunders, a 46-year-old nurse who passed away from a brain tumour because she could not get any treatment at the Gold Coast Hospital.

Time expired.