



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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ROBINA HOSPITAL, PALLIATIVE CARE UNIT

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (7.25 pm): Last month I stood in this House to raise awareness of the effect the lack of a medical oncologist at the Gold Coast Hospital was having on patients and staff alike. Nurse unit manager Jackie Morgan, who had worked for 20 years in cancer care, quit her job at the Gold Coast Hospital in despair over the bumbblings of Queensland Health in trying to engage a doctor. The minister has promised one oncologist will commence at the hospital later this year, but no-one will believe it until they see it. And why should they?

Two weeks ago a number of very upset patients contacted me over the rapid decision to move the ground floor palliative care unit from Robina Hospital to an upper floor ward at Pacific Private Clinic at Southport. This facility provides wonderful services, but is the wrong environment for this close-knit, dedicated unit. According to staff, cancer patients and their families, there are many issues of concern over this move. Poor parking facilities and the central business location causing difficult family access, a lack of a mortuary and no access to fresh air and the outside environment are just some of those concerns. I note that Dr Brian Bell says that this is only a temporary move, yet it is causing enormous anguish.

News from the minister that all of the unit's nurses have agreed to the move has prompted calls to my office that staff are not happy to go, but were too frightened to speak out for fear of losing their jobs and, more importantly, because they are dedicated to the work they do. For some, though, this heavy-handed treatment is the last straw. Today I heard that Dr Rob Hitchins, the respected head of the Robina Palliative Care Unit and a Queensland Health employee for many years, handed in his resignation effective immediately. Today the head nurse has gone on stress leave and the other doctor is considering his future.

Clearly, the culture has not changed. The minister has not learned from the mistakes of the past. More experienced staff are leaving the system due to enforced, unreasonable behaviour from Queensland Health.

A couple of hours ago, I heard that psychiatric patients from Robina are, within two months, to be relocated to Palm Beach Currumbin Private Hospital next to the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary and private residences. These are patients requiring extended treatment, many under involuntary treatment orders, who require supervision having come from P1 and P2 wards for people with acute psychoses at Southport Hospital.

Serious concerns from medical staff have been raised with me that security at this facility is too low to safely cater for these patients who need specialised care, and there would be a genuine threat to community safety should this plan proceed. Staff and local community members are asking why there was no public consultation on this issue. If palliative care is being moved for psychiatric patients at Robina Hospital, then why is there a need to utilise beds at Currumbin? The Health Minister and his department are in crisis and have a callous disregard for the staff and patients they uproot and disturb when they are at their most vulnerable.