



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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MOTION: BEATTIE LABOR GOVERNMENT

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (6.17 pm): I rise to support the motion moved by the opposition leader and oppose the amendment moved by the Premier. The people of Queensland are losing faith in this state government because Queenslanders are facing some of the biggest crises in the history of our parliament. They are losing faith because, while Queenslanders face these problems in health, water, parliamentary accountability and infrastructure, the Labor government continues to deny these challenges. We have every reason to be disenchanted with the Beattie government: if it does not admit the problems exist, it certainly will not fix them.

Last February—a year ago—the Premier stood up and heralded a new direction for Queensland Health. To his credit he recognised the insidious problems within the health department and, with the health minister, vowed to fix this sick system. In February last year the Premier assured the Queensland coalition and the people of Queensland that the embattled health department had turned the corner, so we waited as the Premier talked about the Health Action Plan and told Queenslanders that he was spending billions of dollars. More than one year on from the Beattie government's turning the corner on health it would be nice to stand up in 2007 and say that the Queensland coalition was optimistic and free of scepticism about the government's plan for Queensland's health system. Unfortunately, this will not be the pivotal year Queensland patients have been waiting for.

The Queensland government has already shown its 2007 health cards and it holds a nasty hand. In 2007, the Beattie government still cannot manage the state's public hospital system. Let us look at the amendment moved by the Premier on a focus on delivering infrastructure and services. Let us look at recent events since the election, which indicate a budget blow-out last week when the health minister admitted that there is a \$130 million Queensland Health budget blow-out that will affect elective surgery, despite the fact that a month ago the latest public hospital performance report with regard to elective surgery identified that fewer patients were treated last quarter than in the previous period and that more patients overall were waiting longer for elective surgery procedures.

Last year the government announced a \$1.3 billion increase in the budget for Queensland Health. One billion dollars of this was spent on increased wages for doctors and nurses. Of course that was welcome, but it left only \$300 million to deal with the problems of elective surgery, waiting lists, increased population and all of the problems identified by the Forster and Davies inquiries. The Premier and health minister have ignored the warnings of the coalition. They continue to mislead the people of Queensland on the true cost of fixing the health system.

This year we are spending \$6.65 billion out of a budget of \$29 billion. How much more will they say they will spend, with no result? Let us look at the focus on delivering services around the state. At the Gold Coast last week the skin cancer clinic closed, even though there were hundreds of people on the waiting list. Last year, radiation oncology services on the Gold Coast were unable to be delivered.

Let us look at the regions of Queensland. Last month many regional hospitals refused to perform complex elective surgery because of a lack of resources to outpost health facilities. We will end up with a

two-tier system such as in Cunnamulla, where there has not been a doctor in town for two years. Patients have to travel long distances for vital treatment.

It is unconscionable that patients needing lifesaving surgery are going through the added trauma and expense of having to travel to city centres for treatment. Let us look at five-year cancer survival rates. If you live in the country, you are less likely to survive five years with cancer than if you live in a city. That is an abhorrent and tremendously unfair system.

Let us continue to look around the regions, bearing in mind the Beattie government's focus on delivering services. In January in Townsville cardiac services collapsed when a medical specialist could not be found to provide those services. Queensland Health claims that it was not aware that all three cardiac surgeons would be on holiday during this time and failed to put in place suitable arrangements to provide ongoing care. Queensland Health's inability to manage its human resources was once again the cause of a medical crisis.

That happened in Townsville at the same hospital that only this morning turned away a young prostate cancer sufferer from Charters Towers. That man is 43-years-old and he has had that cancer for five months, but there are no ICU beds for him in Townsville, even though the government has claimed that it is creating space for beds. A total of 1,300 beds was promised in the last election campaign. How many have been delivered?

We could look at Caboolture and the problems associated with the government outsourcing the emergency department to a private company at double what it costs Queensland Health to run it. In Longreach and Mackay there are problems. I could go on with examples of this government failing Queensland Health patients. However, because I would risk completely destroying whatever faith there is in the system, I will not do that. I put it to the House that, thanks to Peter Beattie, health in Queensland has turned the corner so many times that we are going back in the same direction. Under this government, that is the road to nowhere.