



Speech by

## Rosa Lee Long

MEMBER FOR TABLELANDS

Hansard Tuesday, 6 March 2007

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### HEALTH SYSTEM

**Ms LEE LONG** (Tablelands—ONP) (9.24 pm): Despite promises of \$9.7 billion and record budgets, people continue to die needlessly under this government's health system. A young mother in my electorate is one of them. Her husband and family are devastated, and her five children—all aged 10 years and under with a baby just two-months-old at the time of her death—now have to grow up without her love and care.

On Sunday, 7 January this year this normally healthy 29-year-old mum presented at the Mareeba Hospital because she was very, very ill. When she was finally seen about three hours later the doctor took blood for testing and sent her home. He told her to come back on Wednesday for the results and advised her to take some Panadol or Panadeine Forte if she had them.

On Tuesday, 9 January she was gravely ill and was again taken to the hospital with the assistance of her husband. She was so sure she would be admitted that she took a packed bag with her. This time she saw a different doctor who said that her liver appeared damaged as if she drank a lot of alcohol. He repeatedly inquired if she was a drinker despite being told over and over again that she never drank alcohol. Once again she was turned away from the hospital, sent home and told to take Panadol or Panadeine Forte.

By Wednesday, 10 January she could no longer walk. She was so ill and in pain that she was again taken to the Mareeba Hospital. She had to be carried in. A wheelchair was found to give her mobility. After again waiting for about three hours she was seen by the same doctor as the day before. He sent a staff member to take her off to the X-ray department. After waiting for some time her husband, who was minding the baby, went looking for her. He found her alone and crying, slumped in the wheelchair, extremely ill and in pain. There was no-one at X-ray. Instead there was a sign on the door saying 'X-ray closed between 1 and 2 pm'. Her husband wheeled her back to the doctors' rooms. By this time it was mid-afternoon, and the hospital superintendent appeared. The husband could hear discussion and indecision about what form of transport should be used to take his wife to Cairns. An ambulance would have got her there in less than an hour. Eventually a decision was taken to use the helicopter. It takes about 15 minutes to do the trip. It got her there about four hours later, around 7 pm.

Barely two hours later her husband, who was attending the other four children, received a call from the Cairns Base Hospital advising that he needed to get there quickly as they had already nearly lost her a couple of times. On arrival at the Cairns Base Hospital he found his wife in the intensive care unit on life support. She passed away shortly after 6 o'clock the next morning. The cause of death, the family was told, was septicaemia—blood poisoning.

This is a shocking failure by a system that is proving over and over again to be lethal to Queenslanders who rely on it. A full investigation is necessary with the results to be made public. The shameful disgraceful farce that is Queensland Health continues unchanged under this Beattie government, which now has this mother's blood on its hands.