



Speech by

**Rosa Lee Long**

**MEMBER FOR TABLELANDS**

Hansard Tuesday, 7 August 2007

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## HEALTH SYSTEM

**Ms LEE LONG** (Tablelands—ONP) (10.26 pm): I rise to highlight once again the continued failure of the Beattie government to deliver decent public hospital care to the ordinary people of Queensland. We have endured nearly two decades of promises from the ALP in Queensland. We have been promised that things are actually in good shape. We have been promised that any problems were isolated incidents and we are promised that there are no systemic problems. We were promised that it was all being attended to and we were promised that there were no secret lists. We were also promised that the Premier would quit if he could not fix things. But none of that was true.

In just the past few days we have seen an exceptional doctor leave one of our 'premier' hospitals because of a lack of support from Queensland Health. At a time of desperate doctor shortages, he could not, it is reported, get backing to train more specialists. We have also seen the leaking of a report from an independent umpire that has given Queensland Health, under the management of this government, just five more years before it is totally out of control. After decades of promises, after years of ALP 'management', after billions of dollars in record budgets, this government has set Queensland Health on a spiral to doom.

In my electorate, the Atherton Hospital is struggling to overcome the handicap of buildings and infrastructure, some of it built almost a century ago. The Mareeba Hospital has been denied a dialysis unit and ophthalmic services have disappeared. Cairns Base Hospital continues to have ambulances ramping up and acting as de facto wards as it struggles with understaffing, underfunding and underresourcing. It is meant to be the far north's main public health facility, yet even it is struggling to keep its head above water.

Despite the ever-increasing centralisation of the few services we have left, this government continues to force the burden of travelling onto individuals, who are often ill, injured or medically frail. If this centralisation is to continue, then at a minimum a dedicated, frequent and free bus should be provided so that people in regional areas such as the tablelands have the quickest and simplest transport options available. Nothing is as good as having health services available locally, but it is not acceptable to remove services to more and more distant locations and offer a few cents a kilometre as paltry compensation.

We have also recently seen the revelation that patient files were actually marked 'never to be seen', meaning that those unsuspecting Queenslanders would never receive medical attention. It is difficult to imagine a greater betrayal in a public hospital system than to hold secret files denying patients any chance of getting treatment. Yet what do the people of Queensland hear? More promises that it will be fixed. It is to the eternal shame of the ALP that it has made this same promise to the people of Queensland so often and failed to honour them so often that nobody believes it anymore. After Patel, inquiries, studies, reports, investigations, hearings and promises from minister after minister, the only certainty that Queenslanders have is that still nothing has changed.