



Speech by

Hon. Stephen Robertson

MEMBER FOR STRETTON

Hansard Wednesday, 23 May 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Health Consumers Queensland

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Health) (10.01 am): One of our key health reform commitments was to give health consumers a say in shaping policy and initiatives to improve health services. That commitment reflects recommendations by Mr Peter Forster's independent Queensland Health Systems Review for a statewide consumer body to support health consumers in Queensland. I am pleased to inform the House today that we are delivering on that commitment.

Following community consultation, state cabinet has approved the establishment of Health Consumers Queensland, a statewide body that will represent the interests of Queenslanders who use health services. This body will drive reforms to improve consumer involvement in health advocacy, planning and complaints. It will give health consumers a direct say in shaping Queensland government policy and initiatives to improve health services. It will provide advocacy and support to health consumers who lodge complaints about their health experiences.

This is about giving health consumers a strong voice to represent their views to government on all health issues. One of the body's first tasks will be to build the capacity of consumers throughout Queensland to engage directly with government on the delivery, planning and operation of health care. It will also build a statewide network of community representatives to represent consumer interests on health projects, committees and working parties. To this end, five or six full-time officers will be based in regional areas to recruit and train consumer representatives to serve on health related committees. They will be given skills to effectively participate directly in roles regarding service development and improving the quality of healthcare delivery. Members of local health community councils will also be provided with training and support in consumer and community engagement.

Health Consumers Queensland will initially have the status of a ministerial advisory committee comprising representatives from consumer and community groups. This is an interim arrangement to enable strategies to be undertaken during its first two years of operation to build the capacity of health consumers in Queensland to engage effectively with government. The model will be reviewed after two years with a view to moving towards a more independent support organisation in the future.