



Speech by

Hon. Stephen Robertson

MEMBER FOR STRETTON

Hansard Tuesday, 9 October 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Health Funding

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Health) (10.17 am): Since becoming health minister a little over two years ago, I have publicly expressed my disappointment a number of times over the Commonwealth's refusal to pull its weight regarding health. New figures released just a few days ago prove it has actually been walking away from public hospitals for the past 10 years.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report has let the cat out of the bag. It shows the Howard government has decreased its share of public hospital funding in Australia from 45 per cent to 41 per cent since 1996. Funding of our public hospitals is supposed to be a fifty-fifty partnership between the Commonwealth and the states, but we can expect this inequity to become worse over the next year.

By the time the current Australian Health Care Agreement expires next year, the Queensland government will be investing 65c for every dollar spent on public health services in Queensland while the Commonwealth's contribution will be a pathetic 35c. It means Canberra will have short-changed our public hospitals to the tune of \$2.6 billion over the life of the current Australian Health Care Agreement. That is why it was refreshing to hear the AMA last weekend publicly call on the Howard government to restore the fifty-fifty partnership. President Rosanna Capolingua said that it must match the states' contribution in their next funding agreement and take more responsibility for the problems in the health system. That was in Saturday's *Gold Coast Bulletin*. In the *Sunshine Coast Daily* Dr Capolingua said—

It needs to be 50:50 matched. And it needs not a dropping down of the states to match 50% but an elevation of the federal government component of funding.

I could not agree more. The state government is implementing a five-year \$10 billion Health Action Plan, which commenced in 2005-06. This year's state health budget is a massive \$7.15 billion—more than double the \$3.4 billion invested in 1997-98. This increased commitment is in stark contrast to the Commonwealth. Mr Howard's response to his funding neglect and failure to supply enough Australian trained doctors over the past decade is to blame the states and go back to the future with its plan to reinstate hospital boards that will do nothing to address the chronic shortage of doctors in Australia which is the sole responsibility of the Howard government.