



Speech by

**Ted Malone**

**MEMBER FOR MIRANI**

Hansard Tuesday, 4 September 2007

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## **QUEENSLAND AMBULANCE SERVICE**

**Mr MALONE** (Mirani—NPA) (12.11 pm): The admission this morning by the Minister for Emergency Services in the state parliament that an ambulance officer who stole drugs to feed his girlfriend's habit has been reinstated into a position where he again handles drugs underscores the gross mismanagement of the Queensland Ambulance Service. The admission by Minister Roberts that the officer who stole the drugs is now back working as a front-line paramedic and handling drugs including powerful painkillers is an admission that should worry every Queenslanders.

**Mr ROBERTS:** I rise to a point of order. The situation is that the individual in question has not been reappointed as a paramedic at this stage. The member is false in his accusation.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Moorhead): Order! There is no point of order. If you believe the member is misleading the House you will have to write to the Speaker.

**Mr MALONE:** That is an admission that should worry every Queenslanders and I know it will worry every dedicated, principled ambulance officer. I find it incredible that the Premier and the minister continue to deny that there is a crisis in our Ambulance Service, yet this morning the minister admits that he has an officer who stole drugs to feed the habit of his girlfriend and was then reinstated as a front-line paramedic.

I find it incredible that under the Beattie government it is okay to hold a position of trust, steal drugs and be reinstated. The minister's admission shows just how serious the mismanagement of the QAS has become under the Beattie government. How can someone who steals drugs and who dishonestly involves his workmates in a cover-up by getting them to falsely sign off on report forms be now back as a front-line paramedic and again in a situation where they are handling drugs and making decisions on people's lives? I find it incredible that the—

**Mr ROBERTS:** I rise to a point of order. The member is blatantly misleading the House. This individual has not been reappointed as a paramedic at this stage.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. You will have to write to the Speaker with any claim of misleading of the House.

**Mr MALONE:** How can somebody who steals drugs and then dishonestly involves his workmates in a cover-up in falsely getting them to sign off on report forms be back on the front line as a paramedic again handling drugs and making decisions with people's lives? I find it incredible that the minister revealed in parliament this morning that this officer is back and the matter is going to be referred to the ethics committee, as he indicated this morning.

This is back-to-front management. Surely, the matter should have been referred to the ethics committee first before the person was redeployed. What level of confidence does that sort of response from the minister give our ambulance officers and members of the public who are forced to ring 000? The minister is speaking out of both sides of his mouth. He told the parliament this morning that he was not involved in day-to-day staff operational matters and then agreed with the details I revealed that the officer had, over a period of six months, stolen ampoules of painkillers, drained them and filled them with water and handed the drugs on to his girlfriend. The minister did not deny that during this time the officer

concealed his actions by filling empty ampoules with water as well as claiming that some of them had been damaged and then got his ambulance partner to sign off on the official ambulance report. Draining the ampoules could compromise the treatment of patients. It goes against the duty of care and principles of the Ambulance Service. But under Beattie's government, today he is back on the front line.

As this issue has been raised by the opposition, I will refer it to the ethics committee. This incident highlights why we desperately need an open, independent inquiry into the Ambulance Service. Queenslanders can no longer afford to allow the Premier and the minister to keep denying that these life-threatening problems are occurring. We need an independent inquiry along similar lines to the inquiry into the horse flu that has been demanded by the Premier.