



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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MOTION: HEALTH SYSTEM

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (6.05 pm): It is my pleasure to rise to support the motion moved by the honourable member for Caloundra. I note that 10 years after these promises were made—and I am going to go through them individually—today the health minister demonstrated that he thinks that to do something you just have to have a ‘promise-athon’. Those opposite had a ‘promise-athon’ back in 1998 when they had four promises, and the health minister stood in here today and said, ‘We promised more than you. That’s why we win.’ That is what he said today—‘Our promises beat your promises’—and yet now we look back and we see that 10 years ago that is exactly what they were doing. All they did was promise—a promise to fix the waiting lists.

Let us look at the June quarter public hospital performance report just released a month ago, because it shows that there are over 34,000 people on the waiting lists. When the Premier and the health minister went out to speak about that, they wanted to show that there had been more operations done in the last quarter. They neglected to mention that nearly 5,000 of those operations had to be done by private hospitals under the Surgery Connect program. It was then pointed out to them that it was the most urgent surgery that should be done within 30 days and it had actually blown out from the same quarter last year by nearly 40 per cent—that is, people who are waiting longer than they should for 30-day surgery. They were stunned about that, but they had not talked about promising to fix that, at least not when they had gone to that press conference!

What about the promise to complete building Queensland hospitals? I clearly remember being here in early 2006 when the Queensland Children’s Hospital was recommended by a team that looked into the Prince Charles cardiac system. The health minister stood there and said—it is in the *Hansard*—that there are no plans. How could he promise this hospital when there are no plans for it in the forward infrastructure plan, the 20-year regional infrastructure plan? Therefore he was not committed to building that hospital until an election came along and suddenly the Premier was able to announce a children’s hospital. He also did not say that when his government promised to complete building the hospitals it would actually close some, like today’s announcement that Aramac is going to be closed. Going back to the promise to fix the waiting lists, what Labor obviously means when it fixes them is that it is going to fix them in such a way that we do not know about everything that is on the waiting lists like the specialist outpatient waiting lists. We only found out about the 140,000 last year, which has now blown out to about 150,000 plus the more than 100,000 people waiting to get on the waiting list. That is called fixing the waiting lists according to the ‘promise-athon’ given by the health minister.

What about the promise to pay attention to baby health in 1998? Why do I have people contacting my office saying that if they have more than one baby then they cannot access these services if they have problems with their baby crying and they do not know how to deal with those things. If they have more than one baby, it is almost impossible to access those services. People are accessing private services trying to get these services and they are going to private pharmacies where there are maternity nurses giving advice to mothers. That was that promise. The promise was to pay attention to baby health. The promise was to pay attention to it, but instead the government thinks, ‘We’ll note that it’s happening but we won’t do anything about it. And if you need some rural obstetrics and gynaecology and you’re not in Charleville,

Logan or Ipswich', as announced last Sunday by the Premier, 'then you're not going to get services because we'll probably take away the services anyway.'

Finally, there was a promise to revitalise our Ambulance Service. That was obviously code for a new tax, because that is exactly what happened. The Ambulance Service has been revitalised but it came in with a tax that is applied unfairly, more than once for many people. They are the words that we saw from Labor, and it obviously worked out a program in 1998 to just keep making more promises. Even the amendment to the motion from the health minister says that the government is going to improve mental health care. Given that the Premier and the health minister make a virtue of the fact that we are still spending 80 per cent of the national average on mental health care and there is no prospect of getting to the national average, that should be an indictment on a minister who comes in here and says that he is committed to improving and promising to improve mental health care when we only have to look at the facts to see what is actually happening.

What about the Gold Coast? Today the minister said in this place about the Gold Coast—

Why we cannot get enough doctors working there I have no idea.

The health minister has given up. Today he promised that he would do more about health, yet he has no idea. I will tell the minister why doctors, nurses or allied health professionals do not want to work on the Gold Coast. The doctors say to me, 'Because it gives us 10 per cent of our income and 90 per cent of our grief.' The bureaucracy makes it impossible for them to work as efficiently as they want to.

The minister promised that Gold Coasters would have two oncologists full-time. We have now lost one of those and patients are having to go to Brisbane. There are people who are leaving the coast because they have young people who need leukaemia treatment. These people are forced to move because they cannot, with two children, go to Brisbane every day and maintain normal lives. These are the promises of the Labor government.