



Speech by

Mike Horan

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

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MOTION: QUEENSLAND HEALTH

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—LNP) (5.55 pm): Here we go again. During the 11 years of the Labor government there has been a litany of inquiries and apologies. Here again we have one of the most scathing reports that we have ever seen into a lack of planning not only for the health services but also for the adequate infrastructure required. Never has there been a greater need for proper planning than when this state is drowning in \$85 billion of debt. Every financial decision that is made has to be made carefully to use the dollars to the best advantage of the patients.

Some time back we saw the government sell off three income-earning assets to pay for new hospitals: the Mackay Airport, the Cairns Airport and a share of the Brisbane Airport. The income from those assets has been lost forever. When these new hospitals are planned we have to ensure they are based upon accurate health service plans so that the money received in return for forgoing that revenue forever is going to be spent correctly and properly. That is what this debate tonight is all about. Tonight we have moved that the recommendations of the Auditor-General be put into place.

The health minister spoke tonight about a lack of reporting—the sort of rubbish that he stands up and speaks about every time. When the coalition came to power in 1996 there were no waiting lists in Queensland; there were little scraps of paper at different hospitals. It was the coalition that put in place the Surgery on Time plan. In three short months—by 1 July 1996—we had put in place a system of category 1, category 2 and category 3 and we had set the first target for 30 June 1997 to have 95 per cent or more of category 1 surgeries undertaken on time, and that target was achieved. By the time the election was called, which was before the end of the next financial year, we were well on track to achieving 95 per cent or more on category 2 surgeries. As I recall, it was sitting at around 80 per cent. It was the coalition that put in place a plan to see that people had their operations on time.

It was the coalition that put in place the Capital Works Program. There was about \$1.6 billion in the capital works fund. Peter Beattie had raided something like 40,000; he took it out and put it into the operational funds to cover up his black hole of cost overruns. There was a system of water colour paintings. There was a social worker, who was probably a very good social worker, in charge of the Capital Works Program. It was the coalition that put in place planning, project managers, engineers, lawyers experienced in construction management and a full team of people to drive the \$2.6 billion capital works plan, which we did with fortnightly meetings, timetables and budgets. We set in place the systems that delivered at that time around 120 projects ranging from little nurses quarters at Alpha to massive projects costing hundreds of millions of dollars such as the PA Hospital and the Royal Brisbane Hospital.

Some of the remarks made by the Auditor-General in this amazing report—it is absolutely scathing—are frightening. It really demonstrates a government that is just rolling along, doing what it wants, making political decisions and not using the taxpayers' money properly, which is so scarce, to provide the patient care and the services that are needed. But probably none is any worse than when he says that in three of the four districts audited the ability to develop effective health service strategies for the future was restricted by recent infrastructure decisions to increase capacity which had not been based on a thorough assessment of service needs. This is part of the story of the wanton waste that has occurred and the lack of proper spending with regard to front-line services that are being delivered.

There are four recommendations. We do not want some wishy-washy amendment like the government is putting forward here so it can skate around these recommendations. We want to see the four recommendations implemented and have the force and the weight of this parliament behind them so that never, ever again will we come back here with another report like this which says that the government has failed again and the government has to stand up again and say, 'Sorry, we'll do it better next time.' We must have these four recommendations put in place so that the scarce dollars can result in proper patient care.