




Speech by

Dr Chris Davis

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

Hansard Tuesday, 30 October 2012

MOTION: AGED CARE

 **Dr DAVIS** (Stafford—LNP) (5.50 pm): I rise to second the amendment moved by the Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services. Indeed, my support is for the plans as announced by this government that will appropriately allow Queensland Health to refocus its finite resources on its core healthcare responsibilities. As the minister has just mentioned, over seven years ago the Queensland Health Systems Review, also known as the Forster review, was released with bipartisan support. On pages 10 and 11 of that report there is reference to aged-care services. It states—

The appropriateness of Queensland Health as provider of aged care facilities is questioned. Opportunities to sell these facilities to private sector providers with appropriate safeguards for residents and staff should be assessed and if favourable sold.

I have a strong affinity to the Forster report as on page 378 of that report my name appears together with that of Professor Ken Donald from the School of Medicine at the University of Queensland; Dr Bill Glasson, the former national president of the AMA; and Ms Janelle Taylor, the Queensland Nurses Union representative. We were all involved in supporting that report.

What has happened over seven years? In fairness, the reason Eventide has remained a provider of complex aged-care services is due to the difficulties in accessing these in the not-for-profit sector and charitable sector, whose ability to provide such complexity in particularly dementia care and palliative care is as a direct result of the failure of the federal government to provide adequate funding to ensure the financial sustainability of such services. This in turn has required the state government to not only provide the services but to cross-subsidise them at the expense of core acute and subacute services that the state government has a responsibility for providing.

How ironic is it that the federal Treasurer, Mr Wayne Swan, is leading the charge in criticising the state government for needing to pull out of cross-subsidising the federal responsibility of aged care when the blame for the issue can be fully sheeted home to his government for not properly funding complex aged care. This failure by Mr Swan and the former Labor Queensland government not only made the operating budget unworkable but also left nothing in the kitty to provide for capital replacement. So we have a situation where there is no money to bring the approximately 30-year-old Bramble and Flinders buildings at Eventide up to current building and fire code standards. We know from tragedies elsewhere the enormous risk to older people from not complying with such standards. An August 2012 assessment determined that these buildings are at end of life.

Fortunately, there is a solution. There are not-for-profit and charitable providers in the Brighton, Sandgate and adjacent areas. Mr Swan should shift his focus to ensuring that they are funded to offer complex residential care in modern buildings as well as ensuring sufficient community packages for those who would benefit from them. As befits Queensland healthcare responsibilities, Eventide will in fact continue to provide on-site rehabilitation and other subacute healthcare interventions. The majority of the beneficiaries of such services will indeed be the elderly. Such interventions will allow many of them to return home, which is ultimately the best solution for both themselves and their families.

The Minister for Health has stressed that there is no proposal to sell Eventide, but even should that become necessary it will be entirely due to the massive waste incurred by the former Labor state government with its frightful legacy in that area. As the Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services has stressed, the potential sale was certainly something canvassed by Labor governments.

The Newman government is committed to sorting out the mess left by the previous government. This decision taken by the Metro North Health and Hospital Board is certainly consistent with that. Queensland Health must get on and focus its core health responsibilities for health and leave residential care to the experts in that field. All that is required now is for the current member for Lilley to discharge his responsibilities to fund the system properly. It is indeed time for Mr Wayne Swan to close his mouth and open his chequebook. I commend the amendment to the House.

(Time expired)

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