




Speech by
Gavin King

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Hansard Wednesday, 20 June 2012

**HEALTH AND HOSPITALS NETWORK AND OTHER LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT BILL AND HEALTH LEGISLATION (HEALTH
PRACTITIONER REGULATION NATIONAL LAW) AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr KING** (Cairns—LNP) (9.40 pm): I rise tonight to speak in the cognate debate of the bills before the House, in particular the Health and Hospitals Network and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. This bill will ensure that the people of Cairns and all Queenslanders can once again have faith in their public hospitals and health services. It means that our hardworking front-line health staff will have localised support to deliver the best outcomes for their patients.

This bill provides hope for patients in Cairns and Far North Queensland because for so long under Labor our region suffered under a centralised, overly bureaucratic health system run out of George Street here in Brisbane. For too long patients in Cairns have been forced to travel hundreds of kilometres to Townsville or 2,000 kilometres to Brisbane for treatment, some forms of which are often basic procedures that have never been made available at Cairns Base Hospital. This bill ensures that local hospital boards will be able to address the concerns and health needs of our community and respond accordingly.

There is one key reason I fully support the introduction of this legislation—that is, the abject failure of the former Labor government to adequately provide for the health needs of Far North Queenslanders for so long. The Labor Party has held the seat of Cairns for more than 100 years, but it never repaid that support with a new hospital out of the path of potential storm surges and cyclones. It did not listen to the concerns of the Far North Queensland community and failed to plan for the future of health services for Far North Queensland patients. Members should not rely only on my observations about the failings of the former Labor government. Respected former Labor Treasurer Keith De Lacy condemned the Labor Party in 2008, more than four years ago, for not planning for the future. In the *Cairns Post* on 20 February 2008 Mr De Lacy said—

Of course, it would have been better to build it back then because of all the expenditure that's been put in.

He is referring to building it back in 1995. He goes on to say—

But it goes without saying ... we need a new and properly constructed hospital on a new site. That site is no longer adequate and we will always have second-hand health services if the hospital remains there.

The site he refers to in that quote is the Esplanade. Instead of following that wise advice from one of their own, what did the former Labor government do? Well, the former state government told the Cairns community that it would sell its profitable airport just to pay for long-overdue hospital services. The city had to beg for help for its hospital. Thousands of people signed a petition back in 2008. The community had to plead with the former Labor government for adequate health services, only to be told that we would have to sell off our profitable airport to pay for health services.

A government member: And Mackay.

Mr KING: And Mackay. I take that interjection. The people of Cairns were told that the only way they would get a fair go for their hospital was to flog off their airport. What did former Premier Anna Bligh say about this disgraceful trade-off? Anna Bligh said—

This makes sure Cairns gets what it deserves.

Well, if anyone got what they deserved it was the Labor Party on 24 March. As an aside, I note that the member for Mulgrave arrogantly dismissed community concerns about the former Labor government's redevelopment of Cairns Base Hospital, which many described as a bandaid, by saying in a press release on 24 February of this year, 'It might as well be a new hospital.' I also look forward to the member for Mulgrave delivering on his grandiose promises contained in a media release on that same day in which he said, 'I want to build a brand-new hospital for south Cairns,' and his wish to 'see something on the ground by 2015'. I have no doubt that a new health facility is required in the south of Cairns, but I look forward to the member for Mulgrave explaining to his constituents exactly how on earth our government is expected to fund that project given the disastrous fiscal position—heading towards \$100 billion of debt—his former government left this state in. The complete delusion and denial of Labor former cabinet ministers about their reckless mismanagement of Queensland's finances continues, so I do not expect an adequate answer from the member for Mulgrave anytime soon.

In contrast, the Newman government is committed to delivering local solutions for local problems. I was extremely proud to stand with the Premier during the election campaign for our announcement of an extra \$15 million to deliver specialist services to Cairns Base Hospital. I especially thank the health minister for his commitment to increase specialist services at Cairns Base Hospital, with the first \$4 million instalment of that \$15 million pledge on the table for the new board to begin work from 1 July.

The people of Queensland demand transparency and accountability from their public health system. This legislation amends the act to give the people of Cairns and Queensland what they want and deserve—that is, an honest, transparent and accountable health system. The Health and Hospitals Network and Other Legislation Amendment Bill will establish advisory boards to be called hospital and health ancillary boards for hospitals and health districts across the state and they will require each hospital and health board to establish an executive committee to support the board in its role of overseeing each hospital and health service.

This bill hands power back to the regions and local communities. It will allow local communities, such as those in Far North Queensland, to decide what their needs are. Community involvement in the running of hospital and health services will be strengthened as a result of this bill. Hospital boards will feature a wide array of local community members to provide advice and support on their local health services and needs. I take this opportunity to congratulate respected Cairns businessperson Bob Norman on his appointment as chair of the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Board. I have no doubt Mr Norman will do a fantastic job, and I look forward to working with him and his fellow board members from 1 July to get the people of Cairns the hospital and health services they have been denied for so long under the former Labor government.

I acknowledge the minister's point in introducing this bill that this is not a quick fix. Queensland can rest assured that we will not repeat the mistakes of Labor's \$1.25 billion payroll debacle. With careful consideration and in strong partnership between the Newman government and local hospital boards, issues such as service planning, service delivery, accountable monitoring and evaluation will be delivered. This bill is about devolved decision making. It is about empowering regional and rural Queensland. It is about delivering the services local communities want and need. I commend these bills to the House.