



Speech by


**Hon. Mark McArdle**

**MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA**

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

 **Hon. MF McARDLE** (Caloundra—LNP) (Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (7.58 pm): I rise to say a few words in this cognate debate on the bills before the House tonight and I will confine my comments predominantly to the Health and Hospitals Network and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Many members have made comment that it was the Wayne Goss government that took apart the then hospital board structure. But perhaps it is important to understand that it was actually Kevin Rudd, who was his chief of staff at the time, who dismantled what was a very effective and very efficient hospital board network across the state. That is ironic, and I will explain why a little down the track. Since that point in time under the Goss government, successive Labor governments have refused to acknowledge the benefit—or, in fact, the existence—of hospital boards as anything more than a waste of time and money. It was therefore very ironic that, in the run-up to Kevin Rudd's election victory, one of the things he committed to do was to correct the public health system right across the nation.

He made the comment that if we—that is, the states—did not fix it he would take it over. I think the date given was 1 July 2009. Kevin Rudd said that if we had not resolved the issues by then he would step in and take charge of the public health system. It was, I suspect, a short time later that he realised that his statement was out of step with reality, because no federal government could operate one state health system, let alone a national health system, efficiently and effectively.

I can recall that, during his tour around the nation, when Kevin Rudd was in Queensland he made a comment that he was looking at giving control back to the local people, the local doctors, the local clinicians, to run the hospitals on the ground. At this point in time the Labor government in Queensland was still making it quite clear that it would never support the board structure or the board system. But Rudd had put in place the perfect regime that led to the bill before the House tonight. He actually started the chain of events. What he said to the states was, 'I'll give you a bucketload of money if you come on board and set up a system that empowers the local clinicians to take up the cudgels and the local community to take up the effort to ensure their health system works.'

Lo and behold—you wouldn't believe it—overnight the Labor government in Queensland did a flip. It endorsed the board principle. It would never call it a board. It called it a network, but the principles that existed before Goss and before Rudd took it apart were in fact enshrined last year in an act of this House. It is ironic that I pay tribute to Kevin Rudd, a Labor member, for awakening the hip pocket of the Labor government in Queensland and putting in train a process that has now led to boards being put back in place here in Queensland. The man who destroyed it actually put it back in place. The government that was in charge of this state for some 12 to 14 years flipped like you would not believe when a cheque was held out to it and dangled in front of its nose. It sniffed it and banked it as quickly as you like, and here we are today with a system that has the potential to be the best hospital system in the nation.

In addition to that, the coalition under successive leaders and the LNP under Lawrence Springborg and John-Paul Langbroek insisted upon the hospital board system as the way to go. They saw the enormous benefit in garnering the support and respect of the local community with their doctors and their nurses to develop what we have today as a potential leap forward into great things to come.

I listened to the speech of the member for South Brisbane in regard to the Children's Hospital and I took particular offence at her insinuation that members on this side of the House did not care about the health and wellbeing of children. I can tell her now that every member of this House would walk over broken glass to assist a sick or injured child. Her comments were offensive. Her comments, unfortunately, were in common with her attitude towards anything that this government does or says. She should be ashamed of herself, because making the comment in the way that she did shows more about her than what she tried to show about us. It was a shameful comment and she should be very sorry for making it.

The Treasurer's comments related to the simple fact that the construction of the Queensland Children's Hospital was commenced in this chamber in the seat occupied by the health minister when Peter Beattie stood up and declared that it would be built at South Brisbane. It was as simple and straightforward as that. The sad reality is that there was no planning undertaken and the cost has blown out from about \$700 million to about \$1.2 billion.

**Mr Springborg:** \$1.5 billion.

**Mr McARDLE:** \$1.5 billion. That is the issue we became so incensed about—the lack of planning when that money could have been spent on delivering health services elsewhere across Brisbane and across the state. It was a purely political statement by the Premier at the time without any consideration for the long-term impact on the welfare of children not just in Brisbane but also right across the state. I ask the member for South Brisbane to formally apologise to this House for the disgusting and ridiculous statements she made insinuating that the LNP does not care about children.

I conclude with this comment: the Sunshine Coast has as the chair of its board Professor Paul Thomas. Professor Paul Thomas, not single-handedly but in large measure, established the Sunshine Coast university over a period of 10 to 15 years. There is a famous photograph of the professor at his car with his boot lid up and the books lying in the boot. That was the start, so history tells us, of the university itself. This man has built that university up to be one of the most amazing institutions I have ever come across in this state. He is a man who is driven by passion and by desire, but he also understands that he has a strong obligation to ensure what he puts his hand to turns out well. Professor Paul Thomas is the man who will lead the Sunshine Coast hospital board, and he will make it work because he has the contacts and the networks right across our community to establish the needs, the aspirations and the results. I wish him all the very best. I say to him on behalf of all members of the Sunshine Coast in this parliament: well done, congratulations and we will work with you indeed.