




Speech By
Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

MOTON: NEWMAN GOVERNMENT

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (5.39 pm): I rise to second the motion moved by the shadow minister for health. The so-called Blueprint for Better Healthcare in Queensland is a waste of public resources, used to prop up an LNP party fundraiser. The document itself combined motherhood statements and the attempt of the LNP to claim credit for several areas of Labor's health reforms. The only contribution from the LNP was their clear commitment to privatising public health care in Queensland.

The LNP government, under the health minister, has imposed upon the Queensland health system drastic cuts to hospitals and front-line services. The minister is desperate to hide from the decisions of his LNP government. Time and time again we see the minister try to blame local boards for implementing the government's decision. After the drastic cuts the LNP government imposed on hospitals were revealed to cause massive job losses and service reduction, the minister has been desperate to point the finger at Canberra. But the minister cannot hide from the very simple fact that the three per cent efficiency dividend imposed on local health and hospital districts has cost \$17.4 million for the Cairns and hinterland area alone—that is, the state government has cut \$17.4 million out of the Cairns health system. Then there is the \$2 million from the Cape York service and the \$2.4 million from the Torres Strait services. Yet the minister and local LNP members of parliament refuse to take responsibility for their cuts.

I was in attendance at the rally in Cairns the week before last and essentially what this was about was people coming forward saying, 'We don't want this to be a blame game. We want to see an end to the blame game.' Let me recap: the LNP have tried to blame staff sackings and service cuts and closures on adjustments in federal funding announced last year. But they refuse to acknowledge, as I said, the \$3 billion in cuts they have ordered over four years that were outlined in the 2012 state budget. Over four years it is not hard to see that an increase in funding of \$600 million by the federal government will have a more positive impact on Queensland's health and hospital services than a cut of \$3 billion. As I said before, I know patients are tired of the blame game. They are Canberra bashing and they have had it with governments point-scoring with complex formulas and those sorts of things—me too. But, when I saw the response given by the chair of the hospital board in Cairns to media inquiries, I changed my mind.

When finally going on the record, the chair of the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital Health Service issued a media statement which included an answer to the question: 'If we get the funding back from the federal government, what would happen?' He said in summary—

The board will not reverse the decision to implement cost-saving measures identified by Ernst & Young and our executive team if the federal funding is returned to us at a local level.

I table that for the record.

Tabled paper: Queensland Health media statement, undated, regarding health issues in relation to the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service Board [\[2166\]](#).

What this says is that this is all about the \$3 billion in funding cuts to regional health boards across Queensland. That is really concerning to me because essentially Canberra—sometimes they do the right thing; sometimes they do not—has been getting an awful shellacking. But the chair of the

Cairns and Hinterland Hospital Health Service is saying that it would not matter if the federal money came back. This is all about the Health cuts that have been put in place by the LNP in the 2012 budget. I think somebody has some explaining to do. I would certainly like to hear that explanation because either the chair of the health service is wrong or what we have been hearing from the Minister for Health has been wrong all along. So let us hear from the minister what the explanation is.

The minister and the LNP government cannot escape the fact that they are ripping out \$3 billion in funding over four years from regional health boards including the following: staff cuts calculated and imposed by the minister—\$1.646 billion; scrapping of health grants by the minister—\$120 million; sacking of consultants, contractors and other administrative savings, including travel calculated and imposed by the minister—\$283 million; 'efficiency savings' calculated and imposed by the minister—\$944 million.

But we know that with the release of the so-called blueprint the minister has plans for far-reaching cuts to services and privatisation. For health staff and for patients alike, there is more pain to come. The ideological obsession of this government has yet again reared its ugly head. As I said earlier today, the LNP are not waiting until the next election to start privatising Queensland. They are already privatising the hospital system—like the Sunshine Coast University Hospital—and they are outsourcing core clinical areas of health care across the hospital system.

This is not some theoretical or political debate. At stake here is the very future of public health care in this state. Queenslanders do not agree on all political issues and they have different ideas about what a government should do. But let me be clear: the opposition is speaking on behalf of the majority of Queenslanders who believe that one of the core responsibilities of government, one of the most sacred roles of government, is the provision of safe, accessible, quality public health care.

Certainly we have heard comments from the Premier in the past to the effect that this is outsourcing; it is not a sell-off. Well, no, it is not a sell-off; it is a sell-out. The LNP is selling out Queensland's future. It is not good enough for the tens of thousands of health staff who work hard every day to deliver a 24-hour modern Health system to be sold out in this way.

(Time expired)