




Speech By
Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

Record of Proceedings, 3 April 2014

HOSPITAL AND HEALTH BOARDS AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (5.24 pm): I rise to speak in the debate on the Hospital and Health Boards Amendment Bill 2014. There are great concerns in the community about the senior medical officer issue and our hospitals among patients and people right through Queensland. There is a ripple effect right across Queensland at present. When the LNP made these changes they felt that they were riding on a big high and believed that Queenslanders still loved them. They believed they could continue on in their arrogant way and bring in forced contracts for senior medical officers. They had targeted everyone else. When I put a question to the Premier and he basically said that doctors are happy.

What a great concern it is that the Premier of Queensland does not have a good understanding of the situation. I do not know who was advising him on the seriousness of this situation. In parliament we were trying to express to the government the concerns out there. It was disappointing to see more than a thousand senior medical officers turn up at the Pineapple Hotel. The Deputy Premier tried to do his best to convey the perception that this was a union organised rally. They were hoping that in the minds of the people of Queensland there was some doubt about this rally and that it may have been a union rally. The fact was that this was not a union rally. These were honourable, hardworking senior medical officers who were greatly concerned. They had an enterprise bargaining system that they were quite happy with. They work for Queensland Health because they want to not because they are desperate.

As the previous speakers said, some of these people have spent 14 years getting to these senior positions. They are professionals who can get jobs anywhere in this country. They are working for Queensland Health because they believe in the public health system.

At present I notice that the government is talking about building dams and infrastructure. It is trying to divert attention from what has been going on with regard to rushed through laws that attack motorbike riders. Likewise, the workplace compensation legislation was smashed through.

When Peter Beattie was dealing with the 'Dr Death' issue he bought up the Bradfield scheme as a distraction for Queenslanders. The focus changed from 'Dr Death' to the Bradfield scheme. That is what the LNP is doing at present. They are looking for a distraction away from the seriousness of the senior medical officer situation, the possible collapse of our health system and their advertising for doctors from elsewhere. They know for themselves that this is a serious situation.

When the government changed the legislation to force contracts on senior medical officers they presumed that it would go through and nobody would say anything. That is not the case. As previous speakers have said, the reality is that a lot of those senior medical officers are working for Queensland Health because they believe in the public health system.

It is really insulting that it has come to this. The government have given the perception that they are not backing down. It is not about backing down. We just hope that they can venture out of their subterranean existence and have a look at the real world and see what is really going on here. But

they feel that they have trapped themselves and they do not know how to get out of it. I will read an email that was sent to me today from a constituent in my electorate. It reads—

Hello Shane—

As a recent retiree, I am very concerned as to developments within the State's hospitals at present. Apparently this week all the anaesthetists and most SMO's at Cairns base hospital have resigned. According to one member of staff from that hospital, if a patient is admitted with a serious condition, nurses and junior doctors are in the unenviable position of having to treat that person without adequate assistance from senior medical officers after the end of this month.

Junior doctors have to be supervised by SMO's who will no longer be available for this task. The few SMO's who are left (I presume overseas doctors) will be completely swamped with extra duties.

Many Tableland residents with complications that cannot be treated at Atherton Hospital are transferred to Cairns Base—does this mean that this will no longer be an option, and prospects for adequate care will be at a minimum.

As my member for this electorate, I would like to ask you to 'bring to the table' at Brisbane or via communication channels within Parliament, my feelings of apprehension at this development. I thought it was 'Government by the people for the people' rather than an attack on the health system. I realise that doctors and staff have resigned for substantial reasons.

Yours Sincerely, Liz Vermaas, Herberston

The Labor Party closed maternity services at Emerald and then likewise at Moranbah. At that time a place called Tieri was in the paper as having more births per population than any other place right across Australia. Most of those women at that town—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Berry): Member for Dalrymple, is this relevant to the bill?

Mr KNUTH: Yes, it is relevant.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will let you go on, but it does not sound like it to me.

Mr KNUTH: Most of the women from Tieri would go to the Moranbah Hospital to give birth. But when Labor closed down the Moranbah Hospital, there was an influx of women going to the Mackay Hospital to have their babies. Then there was a cost involved with the patient travel subsidy. Then there was an article in the paper about Mackay Hospital not being able to keep up with the pressure of all of the women from Clermont and likewise Emerald, likewise Tieri, likewise Moranbah, having to go to the Mackay Hospital to have their babies and spend three weeks in hospital.

Where I am coming from is that this lady has written to me expressing great concern for the hospitals in rural and regional hospitals, because the senior medical officers will be pulled out of areas such as Atherton and Mareeba, and patients will be transported to Cairns as a matter of urgency, leaving our local hospitals in a situation where we do not have senior medical officers. These are the issues we wanted to bring to your attention, Mr Deputy Speaker. I hope that the LNP will continue to listen. I take that back. I hope that the LNP will do as the Premier said, and that is, 'We are now going to listen to all Queenslanders.' I wanted to bring that to the attention of the House.