




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

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MOTION: ELECTIVE SURGERY WAIT-TIME GUARANTEE

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (6.05 pm): This debate tonight is a debate about substance versus spin. The wait-time gimmick was perpetrated by the Leader of the Opposition. The man who thinks this is so good will not even move the motion. The man who designed this wait-time gimmick wanted to foist on the unsuspecting Queensland population something that would fix a purely political problem—not a real problem affecting thousands of Queenslanders. This was a marketing exercise backed up by \$77 million for bureaucracy, for consultants and for advertising over three years. There was some \$15 million for advertising alone over three years.

The department of health has consistently advised that the wait-time gimmick was flawed. It had a number of significant policy flaws. Firstly, it failed to take into account the entire patient journey and left over 100,000 Queenslanders in the waiting room—left there by the member for Southern Downs. They were left there waiting longer than the recommend times for an outpatient appointment.

Some \$77 million was to go into bureaucracy, consultancies and advertising and there was not one dollar for hospitals. This is the program championed by the Leader of the Opposition. There was only money for spin doctors but not for real doctors. That is the legacy of the member for Southern Downs—a marketing response to a real policy problem. Money was thrown away so he could big-note himself. It was typical of what the former government did. Give something a snappy name—Strong Choices, anyone—and make a few marketing moves. How about a coin with the name of our leader on it? Spend a motza on advertising and with a bit of luck people will think they are better off. Is it any wonder that the Queensland community is cynical of politics? It was a cynical response that wreaked of spin, not substance. That is really what the gimmick on wait times was all about.

That is what those opposite are still on about. They actually believe what they say. Let us look at the figures. In the motion they say that when they left office there were only 73 people on the waiting list. But the truth, as usual, is different. What did they do? They left an entire hospital out of the wait-time gimmick—Lady Cilento Children's Hospital. If we add that in, there were 290 people, including children, waiting for elective surgery on 1 January. But they cannot even be honest with what they write in a motion to be moved in this House. That is the way they operated in office.

If an inconvenient truth raised its ugly head, their attitude was to ignore it, to decry it or to deny it. That was their form in government. By contrast, we have put \$60 million into an assault on waiting lists since we have come into government to put a dent in the waiting list for the waiting list. That is a genuine policy response, not a political response or a marketing gimmick. We have allocated \$30 million for the ear, nose and throat waitlist.

Let us look at Logan Hospital—a hospital that will support the electorate of Woodridge that I am proud to represent here. At the start of this year, 1 January, there were almost 2,600 category 2 patients waiting more than the clinically recommended time for an ENT appointment. But they were to be ignored under the wait-time gimmick. They want a guarantee for surgery but nothing for everybody

else waiting for an outpatient appointment. One person had waited for 853 days. That is a real problem—that is a real person—and that is what this Labor government will fix. But do not take my word for it. What did Dr Bernard Whitfield, ENT specialist and director of head and neck surgery at Logan Hospital, say about that \$30 million investment? He said—

We have a shovel ready project that will dramatically increase the capacity in outpatients at Logan. With this development and a team approach, we should be able to quadruple output through outpatients.

That is what Labor governments do. That is front-line services. That is something real. That is something substantial. That is not spin.

The great con being put about by those opposite is that they 'fixed' health, and the fixer himself, the opposition leader, still wants to prosecute that argument—no policy reasons, no plans; just some magic worked by the 'fixer'. But they had more than a little help. It came from the federal Labor government. They know that. It was Julia Gillard, Kevin Rudd and Wayne Swan who delivered on elective surgery in Queensland by pumping on average hundreds of millions of dollars into our system each year, and they did that under their government. They got on with the job.

The program that the previous government wanted to inflict on Queenslanders did nothing to help sick people waiting to get better. It was a marketing campaign, not a medical campaign. The LNP's wait-time gimmick was not fair. It was not fair to the 100,000 people left in the waiting room by the LNP, it was not honest about the true state of our health system in Queensland and it was not good for Queensland. All of those things—not fair, not honest, not good—were emblematic of their government.