



Speech by

## Dr Mark Robinson

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

Hansard Thursday, 13 October 2011

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### HEALTH AND HOSPITALS NETWORK BILL

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Cleveland—LNP) (7.34 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Health and Hospitals Network Bill 2011. In broad terms, I support the bill in so much as it mirrors or comes very close to the LNP's previously espoused position on local hospital boards. I also acknowledge the contribution of the shadow minister for health, Mark McArdle, for his good work on health reform and I commend his speech to the House and public.

As stated in the explanatory notes, the primary purpose of the Health and Hospitals Network Bill 2011 is to establish local health and hospital networks to deliver public sector hospital and other health services in Queensland. Local hospital networks—called 'local health and hospital networks' in Queensland—are to be established as separate legal entities under state legislation in order to devolve operational management for public hospitals to the local level. Networks will be the direct managers of a single or small group of public hospitals and will be held directly accountable for hospital performance. States will be the system managers for the public health system and will be responsible for a range of activities outlined in the explanatory notes.

It is not my intention to address every aspect of the bill in my speech, so I again commend the shadow health minister's speech to the public. I intend to cover just a few aspects of the bill—in particular, the local hospital management aspects. There is no doubt that, under this failed, long-term Labor government, Queensland's health system is falling apart and desperately needs reform. This government's top-heavy Queensland Health bureaucracy has been expensive and inefficient and has led to budget blow-outs, cost overruns and delayed projects at a local level. We have seen the recent \$220 million health payroll disaster that has impacted on nurses and allied health staff, a problem that continues to this day, we have seen the recent budget blow-out of \$600 million, and we have seen recent reports that there are disproportionate numbers of bureaucrats for every doctor and nurse. And now we see the government, in theory—though yet to be seen in practice—adopting the general thrust of LNP policy direction on the matter of local input into the governance of hospitals and the health system.

Labor's inefficient and wasteful system has caused many problems in the provision of health services in the Redlands. I recently reported to the parliament that, in the third quarter of 2011, residents of the Cleveland electorate were surveyed by my office about various health issues. The Cleveland electorate-wide survey from Wellington Point to Thornlands and North Stradbroke Island, called 'Cleveland's Biggest Survey', reveals that Redland residents are very concerned that local health services are not keeping pace with demand. They are concerned about many health related issues that are falling behind, due in part to the government's unwieldy and top-heavy Queensland Health system. While many local Redlanders are grateful for the good work of our doctors, nurses, allied health workers and administrators at Redland Hospital, they are worried that this state government has not effectively identified, planned and delivered essential services on time.

In my survey, residents indicated concerns in several key areas—the main ones being intensive care and emergency services, car parking, bed availability, palliative care, respite care and aged care. One example of how the current Labor system has failed the people of Queensland and why structural reforms are needed is the delayed delivery of the Redland Hospital emergency department upgrade. In late 2008

and reiterated in the March 2009 election campaign, the Premier promised an \$18 million upgrade to the emergency department of the Redland Hospital as part of the government's faster emergency care for our hospitals program. The government's announcement was understood by the Redlands community as an election promise to be completed within the current parliamentary period—that is, before March 2012. It is very disappointing that the state government has put back the promised upgrade into late 2012, although perhaps even that is an early date because it could be as late as 2013-14 according to the QIP 2011 document. It is disappointing to the people of Cleveland that this 2009 election promise has become another broken promise of the Bligh Labor government as we approach another state election.

The people of Cleveland know what was promised to them and by when. They know that the government is deceiving them by claiming that this emergency department upgrade is on track when it is not. The 2008-09 election promise made by the Premier and the then health minister and member for Stretton was that the ED upgrade would include a helipad. An article in the *Bayside Bulletin* of 9 December 2008 quotes Mr Robertson, the then health minister. It states—

The Redland Hospital upgrade would enhance the \$14.8 million redevelopment completed earlier this year, and help tackle record demand at the hospital's emergency department ... About \$500,000 would go toward the construction of a helipad to allow patients airlifted from North Stradbroke Island and the Southern Bay Islands to be treated at Redland Hospital instead of the Princess Alexandra Hospital in Woolloongabba.

The article goes on to say—

Mr Robertson said the helipad would be ready in six months—  
from that date—

but the emergency department upgrade would take about 18 months to complete.

The minister provided both the rationale behind its importance—for the sake of providing emergency services to bay island residents, including North Stradbroke Island—and the timing for completion of the helipad and the emergency department upgrade. If the government's commitment was honoured according to its election promise, the helipad would have been built by 30 June 2009. However, that date came and went and the Redlands did not get its promised helipad.

The next health minister in Labor's top-heavy, overly bureaucratic system, the member for Lytton, eventually reviewed the promise of the helipad and advised the local paper that he had decided that the election promise would no longer be delivered. On 1 June 2010 the *Bayside Bulletin* reported former health minister Lucas's comments. The article states—

While at the hospital, Mr Lucas also answered questions from the *Bayside Bulletin* on the promised helipad that now will not be built—and I emphasise 'will not be built'. Later he even apologetically explained why it was not really that important. Without asking the good people of Cleveland and particularly North Stradbroke Island and the southern Moreton Bay islands, who had received this election promise, and in conflict with the former health minister, the member for Lytton decided that it would not go ahead after the Bligh government had promised it. The people of Cleveland have not forgotten this promise of the government and I believe that they will hold the government accountable at the next election for its failure.

Then came along another health minister—the third minister to have a go—the member for Ferny Grove. So we have had Curly and Larry and now we have Moe. In this sorry story of top-heavy bureaucratic mismanagement, the member for Ferny Grove came to the Redland Hospital last month and tried to tell local people that the helipad had not been cancelled at all, implying that no government minister had ever said so. It is a pity that he did not talk to the two previous health ministers to ascertain what had been said and to get the facts right. So he came to the Redlands and claimed that they had not cancelled the promised helipad.

The actions of successive Labor health ministers with their on-again, off-again helipad have put the people of Cleveland into a confused head spin. The three ministers could not even tell the same story, and now the people of Cleveland do not believe anything they say or promise about the hospital. Because the government provided a strong case as to why the helipad was important—it was important to provide emergency services to island residents— island residents believed that this service would be provided as an election promise. The government provided a strong case as to why it should be provided and then it scrapped it, creating another Bligh government broken promise.

Another matter that Cleveland residents said in the survey was important was a palliative care unit for the Redlands. Since being elected in 2009 I have called on the government several times to provide a palliative care unit for the Redlands. Such a unit would have been provided long ago if it were not for the waste and mismanagement of the Labor government. Residents surveyed joined the 3,000 signatories to my earlier petition calling on the government to provide this palliative care unit and to stop denying terminally-ill Redlands residents the care that they need. On 1 June 2010 the *Bayside Bulletin* reported former health minister Lucas's comments. The article states—

Mr Lucas said he would look into a call from Member for Cleveland, Mark Robinson, LNP, for increased palliative care beds, given Palliative Care Australia recommends 14 beds for the bayside population of 220,000, and there are currently only six beds available.

'We're currently looking for more 'step down' care opportunities, that is, alternatives for sub-acute care, so post-operative patients are able to be cared for in other ways without needing to take up a hospital bed,' he said.

Redlands residents are still waiting for this tired, long-term government to take that action. I call again on the current health minister to act and provide the needed palliative care for the Redlands.

The residents of Cleveland hope that this bill will go some way towards addressing their concerns, including those about Labor's top-heavy Health bureaucracy. They want to see a shift of resources from the centralised bureaucracy to front-end services like more doctors, nurses and allied health workers. The LNP's concept of more local input and less centralised Health bureaucracy has resulted in this government following our policy lead. I look forward to seeing this reform pass through the House so it can begin to deal with Labor's failed system and to deliver better and more local outcomes for the people of Cleveland and the broader Redlands via the Redland Hospital. Only a can-do LNP government will plan and provide for the health services that Cleveland and the broader Redlands need.