



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Hospitals: South Australia

SPEECH

Monday, 22 November 1999

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Date Monday, 22 November 1999
Page 12254
Questioner
Speaker Cox, David, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Mr COX (Kingston)—I have spoken previously about the underfunding of South Australia's public hospitals and the need for a further injection of \$20 million to address the problem of overloading. The state health minister, Dean Brown, conceded the sector was in crisis but could not deliver one extra dollar. Instead, he tried unsuccessfully to get more money out of not only Premier Olsen but also the federal government. He has been unsuccessful in getting more money out of the state government because of his rivalry with the Premier. It seems the Liberal Party's internal political battles are more important than fixing the state's hospital system. He has been unsuccessful with the federal government because the Howard government knows that much of South Australia's hospital crisis was created by Dean Brown's own cuts to hospitals when he was Premier.

The Howard government compounded those problems with its own set of cuts. Now Dean Brown has latched onto Ian Castles' independent report, which identified the need for an additional \$1 billion in health funding nationally. The federal government has not yet responded to that report. However, the Minister for Health and Aged Care was cited in the media as saying that \$100 million over five years would relieve the pressure on South Australia's hospitals. That is \$20 million a year—the same amount I nominated a few months ago. If Mr Brown cannot get at least an extra \$20 million out of the Howard government, he should confess to having reduced public hospital funding in South Australia by more than \$100 million a year. He should admit it was bad policy and ask Mr Olsen to at least partially rectify his mistake with an additional \$20 million annually.