



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

ADJOURNMENT

Moncrieff Electorate: Infrastructure

SPEECH

Thursday, 8 December 2005

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Questioner
Speaker Ciobo, Steven, MP

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Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff) (12.38 pm)—I rise to speak today on a matter of great concern to residents of the Gold Coast. It pertains to the complete lack of infrastructure and inadequate investment into both social and transport infrastructure, as well as education infrastructure, that the Beattie state Labor government is making or, should I say, not making on the Gold Coast. The Gold Coast is Australia's sixth largest and fastest growing city. We have rapid population growth, spurred on by an enviable lifestyle. So many people who have holidayed on the Gold Coast subsequently choose to reside on the Gold Coast. Of course, the consequence of this attractiveness as a destination is the fact that this rapid population growth places significant pressure on the city and its resources. In this regard, I stand today in the Main Committee to highlight the fact that the state government simply is not keeping pace when it comes to investment in adequate social and transport infrastructure. In particular, I would like to touch upon the ongoing saga that is Queensland Health.

I noted yesterday that Gordon Nuttall, the former health minister, resigned from the cabinet because of the fact that he lied—this was the allegation that was put and found by the CMC—to a parliamentary committee investigating the problems that gave rise to the current crisis in the Queensland health sector. All of this was spurred on by the fact that Dr Jayant Patel significantly and directly led to the deaths of a large number of patients in the Bundaberg hospital. This crisis then escalated to a more general crisis within the health sector in Queensland. Flowing from this, I have been concerned to note that, despite the protests of the Beattie state Labor government, there continues to be still very little done with regard to Queensland Health. In addition, of course, charges could be levelled to say: in what way is the Howard government assisting the process?

The reality is that the Howard government has invested in Queensland billions of dollars under the Australian national agreement on health care and health funding—money which has flowed directly into Queensland Health; money which has flowed directly into the coffers of the Queensland state Labor government. In addition to that, the Queensland state Labor government enjoys record revenue flows from GST, and in fact this year alone the Queensland state government enjoyed a windfall of over \$600 million from GST—money that it would not otherwise have. This windfall is on top of over \$700 million from the previous year of money that the Queensland state Labor government would not have had. Also, thanks to the property boom, the Queensland state Labor government has had significant increases in stamp duty revenues. All of this leads to the conclusion that, despite record funding to the Queensland state Labor government over the past five or six years, there continues to be such a high degree of ineptness that many Gold Coast residents now suffer directly from the bad decision making that the Queensland state Labor government has put upon the people of Queensland.

Of particular concern to me is the fact that the state Labor member for Mudgeeraba, Dianne Reilly, the state Labor member for Gaven, Robert Poole, and the state member for Broadwater, Peta-Kaye Croft, have all been remarkably silent. I urge them to please speak up, like the state Labor member for Burleigh, Christine Smith, who highlighted that the health crisis in Queensland was a consequence of some very bad decisions. I encourage the state Labor members to please have the backbone—to have the forthrightness with the people of their electorates—to actually highlight the way in which the state Labor government has made appalling decisions and to do something to pressure the state government to actually correct the situation.

Of particular concern to me as well is the fact that the state Southport Hospital, run by Queensland Health, is going to be closed down. The Queensland state health minister will signify that in some way they intend to replace those services with a new hospital. That is well and good, but the fact remains that the medical precinct built in Southport around the existing Southport base hospital now has a big question mark hanging over its future. I think it is time that the Queensland state government was upfront and honest with the people of the Gold Coast. It is high time we saw significant investment—not new taxes—that builds upon the base that the Howard government is providing the state Labor government.

I once again assert that the state Labor members need to do more to bring scrutiny, accountability and transparency to the Queensland state Labor government when it comes to their decisions. This of course is simply

only one small part of the mismanagement of the state budget by the Labor Party. I will continue to bring it to the attention of residents in my electorate.