



Speech by

Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

Hansard Thursday, 2 September 2010

BLUEWATER MEDICAL PRACTICE

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (9.37 pm): I table a non-conforming petition signed by 486 people who have serious concerns about the loss of doctors from the Bluewater Medical Practice in my electorate of Hinchinbrook.

Tabled paper: Non-conforming petition relating to Bluewater Medical Practice [2909].

The Bluewater Medical Practice operates from two locations on the northern beaches of Townsville at Purono Park and at Bushland Beach. The Bluewater Medical Practice has already lost the services of Dr Olga Gonzalez and Dr Aileen Sarito after they were deregistered by the Queensland Medical Board and there is a real concern that Dr Prashanta Mitra and Dr Victor Mamawal will soon be deregistered by the Medical Board of Australia if something is not done urgently.

As of 1 July 2010, the responsibilities of the QMB in respect of registrations were transferred to the MBA. One of the criteria used by the QMB until 30 June 2010, and now by the MBA, to process applications by overseas trained doctors to extend their registration is the successful completion of what is known as a pre-employment structured clinical interview. I understand that this involves the OTD appearing before a panel of three GPs and being required to answer scenario based questions for 1½ hours. I understand this process does not even involve a representative of the MBA observing the OTD in the work environment to observe their clinical skills.

Dr Gonzalez and Dr Sarito were deregistered by the QMB following this process. These deregistrations have left the Bluewater Medical Practice short-staffed. Dr Mitra and Dr Mamawal are at serious risk of being deregistered by the MBA in the same way. If these two additional deregistrations occur, the practice will be desperately short-staffed, and this has implications for the ongoing health care and medical attention of the local community. This is a real concern for my constituents on the northern beaches of Townsville.

The Bluewater Medical Practice previously treated about 800 patients a week with a full complement of doctors. Following the deregistrations of Dr Gonzalez and Dr Sarito, it has been unable to meet the significant demand for appointments. This inevitably results in a heavier load on the emergency department at Townsville Hospital—a public health facility already frequently unable to cope with demand. If Dr Mitra and Dr Mamawal are deregistered in the near future, it will certainly cripple the Bluewater Medical Practice.

I strongly support robust testing and close scrutiny of the competence and qualifications of OTDs who seek to practise in Australia. However, something has gone terribly wrong with the process of testing OTDs that has resulted in the deregistration of doctors and the possible deregistration of more doctors in my electorate of Hinchinbrook for reasons that have nothing to do with malpractice or incompetence.

The current policies of the MBA in respect of PESCI are having a serious impact on the health care of my constituents. How can a scenario based question and answer session, in isolation and without any observation of the doctor's clinical skills in the workplace, be a robust test of an OTD's qualifications and competence to practise in Australia? I have made representations at both state and federal levels calling on those agencies responsible for the registration of doctors to give consideration to devising alternative processes for testing OTDs to address this serious issue.