



**ROB MESSENGER MP – MEMBER FOR BURNETT
SHADOW MINISTER FOR POLICE & CORRECTIVE SERVICES**

Your Messenger

APRIL 2007

Population growth cause for health care concern

Parliamentary Activity Update:

It has been a busy start to the year for Rob in Parliament, having already made 16 speeches so far this year (at time of print).

Some of the topics discussed so far this year include:

- Religious Education
- Changes to Whistleblowing Legislation
- Cane Smut
- Transport/driver safety
- Injustices of Patel victim Special Compensation Process
- Police powers, resourcing and funding
- Security industry

* Total number of speeches since being elected to the seat of Burnett in the year 2004 is 175

To view any of Rob's speeches, visit:

<http://www.robmessenger.com>

Rob Messenger is concerned about the record population growth and is calling on the government to share vital health information and statistics with the mums and dads of Bundaberg-Burnett so that realistic solutions can be found for our future health care needs. Mr Messenger said it's up to the government to release its Master Facility Plan for the Bundaberg Base Hospital and ensure that we have enough doctors, nurses, specialists and hospital beds to look after not only this generation, but future generations.

"There needs to be an informed, open and honest debate with the community regarding short-term and long-term plans which we desperately need to provide proper future health care," Mr Messenger said.

"Beattie made election promises to spend \$41 million to fix up his health crisis but it's evident he's made that promise without a proper plan...It's silly to throw money at health care without a proper plan."

In light of the latest figures from the Bureau of statistics, Mr Messenger said that the population growth figures are a wake up call that we need proper plans in place.

"The Wide Bay-Burnett is experiencing record growth and if it continues the Bundaberg Base Hospital will service a population of approximately 200,000 in ten years time (*The*

current service area is about 120,000, which now includes four new outlying hospitals, including Monto, Biggenden, Mundubbera and Eidsvold). Will our existing hospital be able to cope with the increased demand?"

Mr Messenger is very encouraged by the progress at the Bundaberg Base Hospital, but the reality is that our hospital is still experiencing:

- Bed shortages (1989 = 216 beds; 2007 approx. 120 full-time care beds, adult patients are still being mixed with kids in paediatrics)
- Medical and surgical wards operating at near 100 per cent capacity
- Significant access block
- Lengthy waiting times accident/Emergency
- 6 year dental waiting list
- Record number of births (over 1200 a year) with only 4 birthing suites.
- Structural deficiencies in hospital design

Mr Messenger recently met with the new Bundaberg Base Hospital CEO, Pattie Scott.

"Because we have experienced the worst health disaster in Australia's history, Bundaberg and Burnett residents deserve the best public health care in Australia and I'm looking forward to working in a cooperative and close manner with Pattie and her outstanding professional team to achieve that goal," Mr Messenger said.

Re-opening of Bundaberg's Mental Health Unit welcome

Rob Messenger welcomes the re-opening of the Bundaberg Mental Health Unit in-patient facility in March and paid tribute to mental health professionals who first raised concerns into its efficiency.

"Finally, after 18 months of being fed with nothing but broken promises from the Health Minister, the Bundaberg Mental Health Unit in-patient facility has re-opened," Mr Messenger said.

"I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the dedicated mental health professionals who first raised concerns with me two years ago about the deficiencies within our health service. If it wasn't for these brave nurses, the Waters Review into the

Mental Health facility would not have taken place and no steps would have been taken to improve the service.

Through these brave nurses who came to me and blew the whistle on the Mental Health in-patient facility, we were able to expose the meltdown of our hospital," he said.

Since the closure of the Mental Health Unit Mr Messenger has constantly fought on behalf of our mentally ill and their families' sake, and our community as a whole, for our mental health facility to be re-opened.

"I have done so through ten speeches in Parliament, numerous letters to the Minister, several meetings with mental

health professionals and executive service staff and speaking out in the media," Mr Messenger said.

"Let's hope our Mental Health Unit in-patient facility is now a permanent superior service for our community, who desperately need this service," he said.

Mr Messenger has written to the Health Minister requesting a guided tour of the mental health unit to ensure the facility can properly oversee potential mental health patients in Bundaberg.

"I would like to see for myself the new improved mental health facility and I look forward to seeing the redevelopments and meeting with the hardworking dedicated mental health staff," Mr Messenger said.

Independent review needed for Patel mediation

The need for an independent judicial review into the Beattie government's flawed Patel mediation process is a matter of urgency, as highlighted by last week's Patel victims' meeting in Bundaberg, which passed a motion of no confidence in the government's mediation process.

The Attorney-General Kerry Shine, who attended the meeting, can no longer claim ignorance and nor can the Premier. Mr Shine would have left in no doubt that the special mediation process he inherited was fundamentally flawed and has left a lot of people upset over the process.

The Beattie government must accept that this issue is not going to go away and its mediation process is hurting the people it was supposed to help.

Patel victims want far greater recognition

of the crucial opinions of Patel victim advocate, Ian Fleming and his democratically elected committee from the Queensland Patient Support Group and they have called on journalists and media organisations to report fairly and honestly by seeking comment from both Beryl Crosby and Ian Fleming.

Mr Messenger has publicly called on the Beattie government to address specific concerns, including:

- *Government offering victims less than what lawyers are paid.*
- *Attorney-General still refuses to release the simple details of government compensation payments to victims and lawyers payments.*

- *Patel widows only being offered funeral and out-of-pocket expenses*
 - *Culture of secrecy being forced on victims (e.g. if they talk to their MP about compensation details they will lose all their money).*
 - *Victims being deemed ineligible for mediation, using the evidence of fraudulent or false medical records.*
 - *Government medical/legal experts writing reports that give Patel and the Government the benefit of the doubt.*
- These serious allegations and flaws can only be redressed through an independent judicial review of the Patel Special mediation process.

Water police needed in Bundaberg-Burnett

Rob Messenger is calling for the introduction of water police in the Bundaberg-Burnett region.

Speaking in State Parliament recently, Mr Messenger said currently the police rely on the services of the SES if the need arises to venture out onto the water.

"I have spoken to a number of SES people and they are very concerned about having to rescue suspected or alleged offenders and the danger that that puts their members in," he said.

"The introduction of a water police division in Bundaberg would be a very welcome development.

Another valid reason to introduce water

police for our region is due to our Port. Bundaberg's Port, according to the Bundaberg Port Authority Annual Report 2005-06, was the busiest first port of arrival in Australia for small cruising craft for the third consecutive year."

Mr Messenger also reiterated the need for additional police resources in the Bundaberg-Burnett region in light of recent increases in crime.

"With the latest break and enter crime spree in Bundaberg and serious assaults, drug and sex crimes on the rise in Bundaberg, the government needs to provide more police and equipment to combat the rise in crime in our

community."

Mr Messenger also expressed the importance of setting up a police beat for the Moore Park community due to the lack of frequent police patrols and poor response times of up to two hours for reported criminal incidents.

"I also urge the minister to upgrade the Bargara police station to a 24-hour station as currently the community relies on the Bundaberg police after hours, which not only raises concerns over delayed response times but also takes police resources away from the Bundaberg community."

Messenger appeals to Beattie to help save young Burnett lives

Rob Messenger called on the government to assist setting up a driver training education facility for Bundaberg-Burnett youths.

Mr Messenger said our shocking road toll is more than enough of a reason to open additional driver training facilities throughout Queensland to improve road safety and address the major problem – the overwhelming number of young drivers involved in road crashes.

"I would like to see a driver training program set up for young people and other interested parties in the Burnett to learn vital road safety skills," he said.

"This would be invaluable to our community and I believe it would prove to be popular. People who have been brought up learning how to drive speedway learn a lot of valuable techniques and

of course are more aware of what a car can and cannot do...it also makes them better drivers."

Mr Messenger said the Bundaberg Speedway Sedan Club also envisages the land being used as a drag strip and a burnout venue to encourage young people to compete in a supervised and safe environment where public liability insurance is guaranteed rather than doing it dangerously out on the streets.

"I consider moving a drag strip or driver training education to Carina to be a great idea," he said.

"In order to do that, the speedway club needs assistance to achieve its ultimate goal. I would ask that the Premier strongly take into consideration its reasonable appeal. It will go a long way to educate youths and young people on driving safety and ultimately it will save lives."



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