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2 June 2005

Mr A J H Morris QC
Commissioner
Bundaberg Hospital Commission
of Inquiry
PO Box 13147
GEORGE STREET QLD 4003

Dear Mr Morris

I refer to the evidence provided to the Commission of Inquiry on Tuesday 31 May 2005 by Dr David Molloy, President of the Australian Medical Association Queensland Branch.

In particular I refer to Dr Molloy's comments relating to "lazy nurses" which are outlined on page 599 of the Transcript. Under questioning Dr Molloy responded: *"I'm glad you brought that up. I absolutely categorically deny ever saying that. Mr Messenger had got some - Mr Messenger had clearly done some homework around Bundaberg which I thought was to his credit and he tossed that line at me and - you know, when he was briefing me, and I didn't know Dr Patel. I didn't know anything about Bundaberg Hospital, and I simply absorbed that as a comment that he made. Mr Messenger, I'm afraid - you know, I believe that he was angry in that the AMA had criticised him for the naming and he attributed, one, that I had praised Dr Patel. I have done so much media on Dr Patel. I've never praised him once. And the second thing is that, you know, I made an adverse comment about the work ethic of nurses and that was extremely unfair and, in fact, it distressed me very much."*

As Dr Molloy's recollections differ to that of the Member for Burnett and Shadow Minister for Education, Rob Messenger MP, and the Member for Cunningham and Shadow Minister for Health, Stuart Copeland MP, and my Senior Research Officer, Jan Fletcher, I am compelled to draw the differences to your attention.

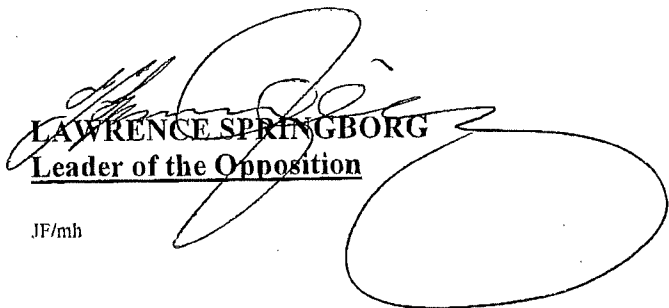
Mr Copeland has advised me that on Tuesday 22 March 2005, the day Mr Copeland named Dr Patel in the Parliament, Dr Molloy left a message on Mr Copeland's mobile which stated in part that he (Dr Molloy) was going to give the Nationals a belt for naming the doctor; once we started naming doctors in the Parliament we were on a slippery slope; and that there were better ways of highlighting problems in the health system than naming doctors; and it appears to be a "nurses' vendetta".

Mr Messenger has advised me that he called Dr Molloy following the release of the AMAQ's media statement on 1 April 2005 in which Dr Molloy was heavily critical of the Nationals and Mr Messenger's parliamentary actions. In his statement, Dr Molloy said in part "*it's an absolute disgrace that Dr Patel has been forced to leave his job, based on a gross misjudgement on the Opposition's part. Bundaberg Hospital has lost a surgeon when it could ill afford to do so.*" Mr Messenger has advised that he challenged Dr Molloy's volatile statement and during the conversation, Dr Molloy advised that he had heard from his sources that "the nurses were lazy and Dr Patel was whipping them into shape".

Mrs Fletcher spoke to Dr Molloy as well on 1 April 2005, and in his discussion Dr Molloy mentioned that he had heard from his sources that "the nurses were lazy and Dr Patel was whipping them into shape". I am also informed that Dr Molloy advised Mrs Fletcher further that "there was a personality clash between Dr Patel and some staff".

As I stated in my Confidential Submission to the Commission of Inquiry, it is imperative that honesty is returned to the health services arena as well as the health debate. Subsequently I convey the above differences of opinion for your consideration.

Yours faithfully



LAWRENCE SPRINGBORG
Leader of the Opposition

JF/mh