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Focus on funding

THANK you for Professor Stephen Coronos' excellent article "Wait or pay up" (Perspectives, Aug 18) which gave valuable insight into the mechanics of funding acute (hospital) health care.

The economics of health care delivery is highly complex and difficult to grasp even for those who work in the system.

This is the case throughout the developed world. In this age of escalating costs and consumer demand, it is high time consumers were better informed about how it all works.

When things go wrong, which they inevitably will from time to time - not least because humans are involved - there could be more understanding and acceptance, and less hurt and resentment.

It is time to communicate. Let's stop the blaming. That achieves nothing.

- Lynne Redknap, Robina.
August 19

Place in the city

I REFER to the article (C-M, Aug 19) outlining Brisbane Lord Mayor Campbell Newman's plans to ban, from the CBD, the vans used to distribute food and coffee to people.

This is like kicking those least able to defend themselves. Our cityscape constantly changes as its users move across it - from the suited office workers rushing to their jobs, to casually dressed party-goers, to the community of people who

Health inquiries should start debate

WAITING lists, at least in the public health system, will always be with us.

They are a form of rationing and are there because Australians have decided that they do not wish to spend more than 8 per cent of the national Budget on health care.

Rather than focusing on the symptoms (the waiting list), it might be better for the community and newspapers to focus on the cause - the underfunding of the health system at state and federal levels.

What we need to have in Australia, and in Queensland in particular, is an open debate on what the com-

munity wants from its health system and what it is prepared to pay.

Some issues of fundamental importance to the health of Australians tend to be sidelined if we just concentrate on things such as waiting lists.

These include disease prevention and health promotion which are given little "air play" as we focus on acute hospital-based medicine and the issue of the health workforce.

It is becoming very clear that the world has a shortage of doctors, that we have to start looking at different ways of delivering services within the health system

(using nurse practitioners and physician assistants, of whom there are 70,000 in the US) and that we have to stop propping up a health system which, at the moment, is designed for health professionals rather than being patient-focused.

The outcomes of the Morris and Forster inquiries will provide Queenslanders with a significant opportunity to ask themselves just what the health system should provide and what they are willing to pay.

- Professor Peter Brooks, Executive Dean, Health Sciences, University of Queensland, Royal Brisbane Hospital, Herston.
August 19

To benefit select few

LIONEL Barden, the businessman behind a developer-backed Gold Coast Council election slush fund, said it was for the campaigns of "like-minded candidates who, united, would make positive and cohesive decisions for the good of the city" (C-M, Aug 19). I suggest the decisions more likely would be for the good of a select few on the Gold Coast.

Residents who are concerned about the environment are not radical extremists, as Barden seems to believe. Neither are they opposed to sustainable development.

Residents are optimistic that there are developers of conscience who can return profits to their shareholders as well as protect natural assets. Developers should work with all councillors and stop targeting the few who are voicing the concerns of their constituents.

- Liz Wayne, Wongawallan.
August 19

Labour of love

FOR organising a fund-raising dinner for a non-profit watersports club, Lizzy Pforr, wife of Gold Coast councillor Grant Pforr, was paid 20 per cent of the funds raised. Payment was approved by the club's board which is chaired by her husband.

She said: "We have spent (an inordinate) amount of hours on the watersports facility." For years my wife

Profits would have paid for upgrades

I DON'T understand it. There has been a big debate between the Nationals and Liberals about how much taxpayers' money the Federal Government will need to spend to maintain parity in telecommunications between the bush and the city.

They have decided on a figure of \$3 billion, using the investment proceeds to keep services in the bush "up to scratch".

This year, the Federal

Government, as the major shareholder, received a \$2.2 billion dividend from Telstra. Next year, it would receive something similar.

It seems to me that this would be a better source of funds for upgrading services in regional and rural Australia. It is sad that this will not happen because it does not suit the right-wing zealots who rule in Canberra.

- Brian Ming, Burpengary.
August 19

THE Federal Government has known for years there was a problem with communications and yet was not prepared to spend money to rectify the matter.

Now with the full sale of Telstra close to reality it has decided to include a \$3 billion package to ease fears in the bush. Why, in the past nine years, didn't it pour that money into boosting services?

- Lenore Tonks, Amamoor.
August 18

Short message on competition tactics

I AM sick of SMS and other phone scams. Recently, my young daughter entered a competition to win a much-sought-after iPod.

The competition was ad-

21 per cent of contestants were left (21 per cent of how many?) and to keep trying. You can imagine the excitement a young girl would feel thinking she was on the

methods and dragging out the competition for as long as possible to maximise profit. The competition in question actually goes down

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