



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

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QUEENSLAND AMBULANCE SERVICE

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—Lib) (6.05 pm): Every day Queenslanders wake up to news of yet another crisis, disaster or failing within the Ambulance Service. I listened to the minister make the same mistake that I have heard successive ministers make here, particularly in the area of health, and that is to think that numbers fix people. Numbers do not fix people. Numbers of dollars, numbers of vehicles, numbers of staff and numbers of stations all may mean something, but numbers do not fix people. What the minister should learn is that, when he sees things going wrong every day as we do, there is something wrong in the system. In most of my electorate of Moggill a person's chance of getting an ambulance in a critical emergency within 10 minutes is less than one in four. I have constituents in Brookfield and in other places who have died waiting for an ambulance.

If you live on Bribie Island you do not have much chance of getting an ambulance within 10 minutes. Sometimes you do not get an ambulance at all; you get a fire truck with firemen with no equipment whatsoever to evacuate an emergency. When you see things going as badly wrong as they are here, you have to ask yourself why, and that means having an inquiry. The government has not been able to sort it out. It needs to have an inquiry. When we could not get coal through on the Goonyella corridor, the government had an inquiry because it could not work it out and the inquiry told the government that it lacked rolling stock. When the health system was failing last year, we had a series of inquiries—the Forster and other inquiries—which identified issues like the bureaucracy, the culture of bullying and so forth.

If you do not know what is wrong, you cannot move forward. So what is wrong that we do not get the Ambulance Service that Queenslanders need to be safe in this state? Is it because the ambulances are queued up in our hospital system ramped up outside emergency departments? Maybe an inquiry would tell the government if that were the case. Is it the funding? Maybe an inquiry would tell us. We know full well that when the present Premier introduced the levy expenditure on ambulances was about \$250 million. With \$100 million worth of levy, that only increased to \$281 million. So maybe it is the funding. Maybe it is the fact that people have been promised the world in ambulances—free treatment for anything at all no matter how minor.

Maybe it is the level of staffing. Maybe it is the same as the health system. Maybe they are all bureaucrats instead of people out on the road saving lives. Maybe it is the morale. Maybe it is bullying and unions standing over people. Maybe it is the bureaucracy. Maybe it is the fact that we have offered ambulance call-outs free for the most trivial of conditions. Maybe it is to do with vehicles. Maybe it is to do with stations. The reality is that there is a serious problem that is costing lives and that is threatening lives. This government needs to get to the bottom of it and fix it. That is why the opposition has called for an inquiry. We have a new minister. I believe he is a person of goodwill. He should be listening to what communities are telling him.

Something that I have learnt from having a background in medicine is that, when a system can barely cope under normal circumstances, it gets found out when there is an emergency. We have had a bad flu season, but it is just that: it is just a normal flu season. We should wait until we get a pandemic, like that which occurred in 1919 or in 1969, or a bird flu outbreak. We should wait until a natural disaster occurs in a highly populated area. We have a system that cannot cope under normal conditions and a system that

cannot cope with a routine flu season. The government is not going to be able to save the lives of Queenslanders come an emergency. I ask the members opposite to hold an inquiry. Maybe all of the reasons that I have stated are the causes. But the system has to be fixed.