



Speech By  
**Hon. Anastacia Palaszcuk**


**MEMBER FOR INALA**

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## **MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

### **Member for Redcliffe; Queensland Health, Employment Contracts**

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.03 am): From the outset, I welcome the new member for Redcliffe, Yvette D'Ath, to the Queensland parliament. Finally, Redcliffe has an honourable member; a very honourable member and someone who will stand up in this House and be passionate about the concerns of the Redcliffe electorate and each and every day fight for her constituency.

I want to briefly touch on that by-election because there are a lot of messages that came out of that by-election. It was very clear that the people of Redcliffe were very upset with Scott Driscoll—the person whom this government had supported for a considerable period of time. But the people of Redcliffe were also very concerned about other issues, including the cost of living. People are hurting out there in Redcliffe as they are right across Queensland. They are very concerned about the high costs of electricity. The prices are continuing to go up. They are concerned about their water bills.

What we also saw on election day was the number of people who are concerned about what is happening in Redcliffe. They are concerned about the firefighters and the fact that this government will not sit down and talk to them about their wages and conditions.

I stood at a polling booth in Redcliffe with the new member for Redcliffe and talked with doctors who are very concerned about this government. They are very concerned about this Premier. They are very concerned about the health minister. They are very concerned that this government is not listening. Why are they concerned? The doctors were prepared to take the time to talk to me about how they believe these new Newman 'WorkChoices' contracts for doctors will impact on the public health and safety of patients going into our public healthcare system.

This government is not about listening. This Premier can talk about a pledge to listen to Queenslanders, but what has he learnt since the Redcliffe by-election? Absolutely nothing! If the Premier were an honourable man, if the Premier were a true statesman, the Premier and the health minister would sit down today and talk about the concerns that doctors are raising with us across the state.

Just a couple of weeks ago the member for Mulgrave, the shadow Treasurer, and I sat down in Cairns with concerned doctor specialists and talked about the impact of the employment conditions that this Newman government wants to put in place. What are they concerned about? They are concerned about the unfair dismissal provisions. What the doctors are saying to me is that if they have any concern whatsoever about the way the hospital is administered or how patients are being treated and they speak out they can be sacked. That is what they are concerned about.

What else are they concerned about? They are concerned about the lack of fatigue management provisions in these contracts. I have read some of the legal advice that has been

forwarded on and some of that legal advice is very clear. These contracts are not better than the working conditions that these doctors are currently working under in our hospital system.

Labor will always stand up for a strong public health system in Queensland. Labor will stand up and support our wardies, support our nurses and support our doctors.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order! Members!

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Today there is a crisis in our health system and the blame is squarely falling at the Premier's and the health minister's feet. The only person from this LNP government that I can see who is prepared to stand up and say anything is the assistant health minister—a qualified specialist—Dr Chris Davis. I am pleased that he is here in the chamber because I want to read from the letter he wrote to MPs. It states—

Dear Fellow MP

Significant numbers of senior doctors familiar with the detail of the government's proposed doctor contracts have rejected them, and already some of the best are voting with their feet.

Legal advice, including that from a major medical indemnity organisation has highlighted the risks. These include dismissal clauses that could result in patient outcomes being compromised, removal of binding independent arbitration and the power of the employer to unilaterally vary the contract.

He goes on to say—

Contracts that could harm patients and be detrimental to the broader community make my position in this government untenable.

The solution that the assistant health minister proposes to the government is very clear, and I quote—

The solution I propose is a return to the negotiating table to achieve an agreement with the medical profession (as in other leading jurisdictions) that provides a framework for reasonable and fair senior doctor contracts that are in the public interest.

He goes on to say—

I would be pleased to contribute my experience to such negotiations, having not been involved thus far.

I table a copy of that letter.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, undated, in relation to proposed doctor contracts, from the member for Stafford, Dr Chris Davis MP, to Liberal National Party MPs [\[4579\]](#).

Here we clearly have a qualified and highly regarded medical specialist, who is now a member of the LNP government, raising issues of concern with the government in the party room. The Premier was indicating today that there were other concerns raised in the party room. Who else raised the concerns, because I know that doctors have been going along and wanting to meet with individual MPs?

The time to listen is now. If the Premier is genuine about listening, if the Premier cares about the future of our public health system in Queensland, this Premier will sit down today and sort this mess out. Make no mistake: doctors are already starting to walk and doctors will continue to walk. Only last week I sat down with some female specialists. One of these doctors was in tears. She was literally in tears that a government could be so cold, so callous, to not care about their concerns, to not care about the public hospital system, to not sit down and negotiate.

The assistant health minister has offered his expertise and experience to sit down and sort this mess out. But what do the rest of the LNP members do? They say nothing. They say absolutely nothing. I sat there this morning aghast at the health minister and his comments on the radio. It was absolutely disgraceful and it was shameful. This minister should stand aside and let a qualified doctor who has experience and integrity sort this mess out.

**Government members** interjected.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order, members!

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Minister, as a member of the cabinet, why aren't you listening to the doctors?

**Government members** interjected.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order, members! Leader of the Opposition, I would ask for your comments to be directed through the chair. I call the Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** We need go no further than the *Courier-Mail*—'Critical condition' and 'Prescription for disaster', and I table those articles for members opposite.

*Tabled paper:* Bundle of documents in relation to proposed doctor contracts [\[4580\]](#).

This is indeed a crisis. This government and this Premier have learnt nothing from the Redcliffe by-election. They have learnt nothing. They will never listen to Queenslanders. A Labor government would govern for all Queenslanders. That is what a future Labor government would do. I would stand up and I would govern for all Queenslanders. This government is so arrogant. Those opposite are so out of touch. They do not understand the hurt they are inflicting upon Queenslanders right across this state. It is shameful. It is disgraceful. They have not learnt the message from Redcliffe. It was a 17 per cent swing. It is a government out of touch. It is a government not listening. It is a government that will not even sit down with the specialists in the state and sort out their contracts. It is a disgrace.

*(Time expired)*