




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Health and Ambulance Services Committee, Report

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (9.28 pm): Today I rise to give support to the Appropriation Bill as detailed at the public estimates hearing of the Health and Ambulance Services Committee on 26 August 2015. The overall Health budget for 2015-16 will provide the required funding for the 16 health services, including the local area service networks for the Queensland Ambulance Service, that span the state and was provided in detail per the service delivery statement.

The relevant departments that provided that detail should be acknowledged for the significant work that went into the SDS, as should the honourable Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services who availed himself for the day under what can only be described as difficult personal circumstances, after the passing of his father earlier that week. That demonstrates, however, a committed minister who believes and appreciates the work of the 86,000 dedicated men and women who make up Queensland Health and the Ambulance Service and who deliver outstanding service and professional care 24 hours a day, 365 days a year across our state.

A record budget for those health services of over \$14 billion is allocated for 2015-16. In Townsville our health service provides services to the electorate of Thuringowa. It is pleasing to see an increase of 6.1 per cent in funding going to the tertiary hospital that provides service delivery to the vast area of North Queensland. That funding went from \$758 million to \$804 million to ensure North Queenslanders have the health services they deserve and require. This increase in funding will see improvements across the broad health services from paediatrics to aged care and mental health and the important area of closing the gap on Indigenous health. Providing a health service is indeed a challenging and changing environment.

The key area of Health is, of course, our nursing workforce. They will see additional funding of \$110 million to provide up to 4,000 graduate nursing and midwifery places and the 400 additional nurse navigator positions across Queensland. This is in stark contrast to the 1,800 nursing and allied health positions Queensland witnessed go under the previous government.

This is a government that cares about delivering health services. This is a government that is adding staff to the Health workforce to ensure safe nurse-to-patient ratios are in place, ensuring patient safety is always the priority in the complex and challenging area of Health. I commend the extra \$11.8 million for intensive mental health care for the young people of Townsville through expanded youth residential mental health services.

I am concerned, as are the people of Thuringowa, that the federal funding for public hospitals will be reduced by a massive \$57 billion from 2017 to 2025, with estimates that Queensland's share of these cuts will be, on a population basis, a staggering \$11.8 billion. Let us hope Prime Minister elect Malcolm Turnbull revisits this extremely concerning and worrying outcome.

Of particular interest to me is the Queensland Ambulance Service. I thank the member for Greenslopes for providing me the opportunity to talk about the highlights for the Queensland Ambulance Service in the budget. With a workforce of over 4,000 and having had over a million interactions with Queenslanders in the last financial year, the QAS is indeed a very busy service.

This vital service provides ambulance and transport services, and planning and coordination of multicasualty incidents and disasters. The QAS has seen an increase of funding which is budgeted at \$633 million. That is an increase of \$44 million or 7.5 per cent. This is vital funding for what is often seen as the first part of the patient journey through health services to discharge. Of course, those vital first interactions with the patient do make a difference, often resulting in a reduced length of stay.

This can be no better articulated than by the rollout of training for prehospital thrombolysis for advanced care paramedics throughout Queensland. Queenslanders can be assured when faced with a family member suffering a serious form of heart attack that advanced help is at hand. It is also impressive to see funding for 75 extra paramedics to manage an increased demand for services.

Of course, paramedics cannot deliver care without the correct tools. I thank the minister for commissioning 155 new and replacement vehicles. We look forward to the reduction in lifting injuries often associated with moving patients, the commencement of the use of power assisted stretchers and the rollout of the state-of-the-art defibrillators. Well done, Minister.

The people of Thuringowa should feel safe in the knowledge of increased funding for Kirwan station, resulting in 2.6 positions, which equates to approximately 100 operational hours for that station. I commend the report to the House.

(Time expired).