




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (4.14 pm): What a pleasure it is to speak on the Palaszczuk Labor government budget for 2015-16. In this week's budget, we have seen the start of a return to fairness in Queensland. We have seen a return to a time when working Queenslanders were assured of having the sort of services they deserve in the year 2015. This budget comes after Queensland has experienced three years of the closure of government facilities, of nurses and midwives being sacked, and a government at war with the state's senior doctors. In that three-year period, the Leader of the Opposition and then minister for health sacked over 4,500 people from the health sector. That included 1,800 nurses and midwives, people on the front line of our state's health system. It became a time when the government of the day, presumably in all seriousness, could boast that it was giving people a guarantee that their surgery would be performed within the clinically recommended time, but only if they had obtained an appointment first. That completely ignored the fact that there were over 100,000 people waiting beyond clinically recommended times for such an appointment. That was not a wait-time guarantee; it was a wait-time gimmick. Their program to address waiting times for surgical operations was based on advertising and public relations, not on surgery.

By contrast, this budget sets up the sort of health system that will be the hallmark of the Palaszczuk Labor government. It is a no-frills system, with an emphasis on service delivery and meeting the real health needs of Queenslanders. This budget has sought to restore balance to the health system with significant investments in front-line services, preventive health and patient safety. In the current fiscal year, the Palaszczuk government is investing a record \$14.2 billion in Health. This is good news for people all over Queensland who rely on our public health system. It represents an additional \$2.3 billion over four years to make sure health and ambulance services keep pace with the ongoing growth in demand for services. We are tackling critical areas such as the waiting list for the waiting list, which was an area ignored by the previous LNP government and brushed aside by the Leader of the Opposition when he was the minister for health.

While the Leader of the Opposition's approach to the problem of people waiting for medical operations was based on a public relations gimmick, this government is investing \$361.2 million over four years to improve access for Queenslanders to specialist outpatient appointments. The big difference between the approach of the previous government when the Leader of the Opposition was the minister for health and this government is that we look at the entire patient journey. Generally, that journey involves a visit to a GP who then recommends an outpatient specialist appointment, who then recommends surgery. The approach of the previous government was to ignore the first part of that journey, which cut out over 100,000 people who were waiting longer than clinically recommended to

see a specialist at an outpatient appointment. The additional funding of \$361.2 million will be phased over four years, with \$71.3 million in 2015-16.

I will be quite clear about this: keeping waiting lists to a minimum will be a challenge for whatever government is in office in Queensland. The reason is not just that we have an ageing population and a growing population, but that over the next decade the federal Abbott coalition government will be ripping billions of dollars out of the Queensland health system. However, now we have this budget commitment, we will develop a sensible phased strategy to tackle the significant number of outpatient long waits in the Queensland health system. We are not arrogant enough—and let us face it, there was very great arrogance in the last government, which was led by perhaps the most arrogant and out-of-touch premier in Campbell Newman that our state has ever seen—to think that we have all the answers here. We will undertake this work in consultation with health experts who deal with waiting lists on a daily basis.

The \$361.2 million funding in the 2015-16 budget is in addition to the initiatives totalling \$60 million that have already been announced in March and May this year, which were internally funded. The budget brought down by my colleague the Treasurer also delivers on an election promise for this government to put more nurses in hospitals. We are investing an additional \$212.3 million over four years in important nursing workforce initiatives to improve patient safety and healthcare outcomes in Queensland's hospital and health services.

As part of these commitments, over the next four years we will employ up to an additional 400 experienced nurses to help patients navigate the health system. We will offer up to 4,000 additional places to new Queensland nurse and midwifery graduates, and we will legislate, for the first time in our state's history, mandatory nurse-to-patient ratios in acute wards.

Research shows that nurses have the biggest impact on patient safety and better healthcare outcomes for patients. Strengthening the nursing workforce leads to shorter periods of stay in hospital, improved clinical outcomes, reduced waiting times and better access to care. That is why we are investing \$101.6 million over four years in addition to internal funding to rebuild and expand our nursing workforce across the state.

These 400 nurse navigators will help patients navigate an increasingly complex health system by focusing on the patient's entire healthcare journey rather than on just a specific disease or condition. The government is also providing \$110.7 million over four years, in addition to internal funding, for up to 4,000 nurse and midwifery graduates. Sixteen new nurse educator positions will be established to support these graduates as they enter Queensland's nursing and midwifery workforce which will support effective local implementation of the graduate program.

The Palaszczuk government is also a government for all Queenslanders regardless of where they live. Consequently, we will also invest an additional \$180 million over four years to refurbish and modernise ageing and outdated hospitals in regional Queensland—hospitals that were left languishing for three years under the LNP. This investment will fund vital upgrades and repairs at the Roma, Hervey Bay, Gladstone and Caloundra hospitals. These upgrades will drive jobs for regional Queenslanders, with approximately 940 construction jobs being created as a direct result of these upgrades over four years.

As part of this investment, structural defects and a range of clinical functionality and backlog maintenance issues will be addressed at Roma Hospital. Hervey Bay's emergency department is to be expanded to meet increasing demand for services. Gladstone Hospital's ageing emergency department will be upgraded. Caloundra Hospital will be refurbished to accommodate service delivery changes associated with the commissioning of the Sunshine Coast Public University Hospital.

There is more to the Health portfolio than just hospitals. That is why the Palaszczuk government will invest in preventative health programs that keep Queenslanders healthy and out of hospital. In Diabetes Week I am proud to be the minister responsible for the Health for Life program which will invest \$27.2 million over four years to make it easier for people to identify and take action on risk factors for diabetes and chronic disease.

We will reopen the Biala Sexual Health Clinic in Roma Street and develop a statewide sexual health strategy, with an additional \$18.5 million invested over four years.

This is unashamedly a Labor Health budget. It is not obsessed with budgetary matters, as the LNP was, but on providing real front-line services to real people. The Labor Party in office has a proud tradition of supporting the public health system. I am proud to be a member of a government which is continuing that tradition.

I also put on the public record a number of issues in response to matters raised by those members opposite. What a debate it has been to hear the cant and hypocrisy and the outright dishonesty of those members opposite when they have deliberately misrepresented the budget.

What did we hear from the member for Beaudesert and the member Cleveland about programs such as the Mums and Bubs program? They had the temerity to stand up in this House and say that the program had finished. That is what they said. In their speeches in this debate on the budget they had more front than David Jones to stand up in this House and say that that program had been axed.

Labor is committed to ensuring the Mums and Bubs program continues and that mums and bubs receive the best possible health care. We are not discontinuing funding for the Mums and Bubs program. I can confirm that funding will continue to flow. That program sees new families and newborns receive a home visit shortly after birth. We hope to expand on that with our new nursing program and therefore expand the delivery of services in the community.

The school nurses program will take nurses back into schools to help children, particularly in cities like Logan—

Ms Fentiman: Hear, hear!

Mr DICK: I take the interjection from the minister and member for Waterford. It will take nurses back into cities like Logan to help families of children identify problems which may impede their learning. It may assist their educational pathway by identifying health problems earlier.

At page 14 and 15 of the Service Delivery Statement we outline the service standard on the number of in-home visits to families with newborns in accordance with the Mums and Bubs program. It is a service standard that is being discontinued. It is in the Service Delivery Statement. It is an activity measure which is essentially a data collection mechanism. An opportunity to create a more meaningful and comprehensive reporting service has been identified and is currently in the process of being developed.

The people of Queensland need to listen carefully to those members opposite as they go out of their way to misrepresent the budget and misrepresent what the Labor government is doing to build jobs for now and the future, to restore front-line services and to stimulate our economy, particularly in areas that were left languishing by the LNP, including tourism.

There are a number of initiatives in this budget to support the electorate of Woodridge. Those initiatives include assisting the Springwood Australian Football Club re-turf their oval. That is significant investment of \$100,000. There are other initiatives to support vulnerable families in the community of Woodridge. We are doing what Labor governments do. We are standing up with and for vulnerable people to assist them.

There are other investments in this budget that will help the hardworking businesses in Woodridge. I had the great privilege during the election campaign of meeting an extraordinary number of hardworking people in the electorate of Woodridge—self-employed businessmen, tradesmen and women, professionals in our schools, our healthcare clinics, our hospitals and our childcare centres. These are people who work extremely hard. The focus of this government is to support those people—to support hardworking, aspirational Queenslanders who want to make a better life for themselves and their families. That is why I commend this budget to the House.