



Speech By  
**Hon. Cameron Dick**


**MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE**

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Record of Proceedings, 11 November 2015

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Member for Mudgeeraba**

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (2.13 pm): I rise on a very important issue in this House today. All Queenslanders expect when they attend a Queensland public hospital that they will be treated by competent, qualified and registered clinicians. On this side of the House, we respect the rights of suitably qualified professionals to maintain their registration and skills while serving in this House.

Earlier this year, I received a letter dated 9 July from the member for Mudgeeraba requesting a 'visit' to Robina Hospital and Gold Coast University Hospital. On 15 October 2015 I approved Ms Bates's request, granting authority to attend the hospitals for 30 minutes as an observer on 24 October 2015. I am disturbed by reports, including statements from the member herself, that she has been working shifts as a registered nurse at Gold Coast hospitals. On 14 October in a committee hearing of the Health and Ambulance Services Committee, the member stated—

About three weeks ago I worked a night-duty shift—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order, members! Member for Kawana, if the member for Mudgeeraba wants to make an interjection, she is able to. She does not need your assistance.

**Mr DICK:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I repeat: on 14 October in a committee hearing of the Health and Ambulance Services Committee, the member stated—

About three weeks ago I worked a night-duty shift at the Gold Coast University Hospital.

On 23 October 2015 in correspondence the member for Mudgeeraba claimed to have 'completed shifts' at the Gold Coast University Hospital and the Robina Hospital. She specifically stated that she was 'on night duty' at the Gold Coast University Hospital and referred to 'working' at the Robina Hospital. On 28 October 2015 Ms Bates made further remarks at a public hearing of the Health and Ambulance Services Committee stating, and I quote again—

I did an actual full shift at Robina Hospital a couple of weeks ago. I spent a lot of time in the mental health unit and the ED ...

The member for Mudgeeraba has repeatedly claimed that on around 23 September 2015 and again in mid-October she completed night duty and other shifts at the Gold Coast University Hospital and the Robina Hospital. Today she has claimed in the media that she 'undertook an education, research, advisory and policy development role'. It is unclear from her statement in the media and in the House this afternoon whom she was educating, what she was researching or whom she was advising.

I am advised that on 28 April 2014—more than 18 months ago—the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia placed restrictions on Ms Bates's registration as a nurse, such that she was not to undertake any role involving 'direct or indirect clinical patient contact unless approved to do so by the board or its delegate'. It is unclear to me how following clinical teams around a hospital does not amount to indirect clinical patient contact. The conduct and statements of the member for Mudgeeraba do not add up. The member for Mudgeeraba has either misled this parliament or breached her registration obligations as a registered health professional or she has done both. All Queenslanders expect when they attend a Queensland public hospital that their private health information is kept absolutely confidential.

**Ms BATES:** I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. The minister knows full well that he met me in the stairwell and I told him what I was doing and I thanked him for giving me the opportunity. I suggest, Mr Speaker, that the minister actually goes and does a shift himself at the hospital.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members! Member for Mudgeeraba—

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Callide! Member for Mudgeeraba, if you have a point of order, if you find something offensive and you ask it to be withdrawn, you can do that. You can write to me if you choose. Do you find anything offensive that you wish to be withdrawn?

**Ms BATES:** Mr Speaker, I find absolutely everything that the minister says personally offensive and I ask that he withdraw the entire statement.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members! Minister, under the conventions of the proceedings of the parliament, if a member finds something personally offensive the standard procedure is that it is withdrawn unconditionally.

**Mr DICK:** Mr Speaker, I withdraw, but I cannot change—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Minister, with respect—

**Mr DICK:** Mr Speaker, I withdraw.

**Mr SPEAKER:** It is the convention to have an unconditional withdrawal. Do you have anything further to add?

**Mr DICK:** I do, Mr Speaker. These are serious matters that affect the operation of public hospitals in Queensland. Let me say this. All Queenslanders expect when they attend a Queensland public hospital that their private health information—

**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members, you are all now warned to come to order—member for Kawana, member for Callide and everyone else. I call the minister.

**Mr DICK:** All Queenslanders expect that when they attend a Queensland public hospital their private health information is kept absolutely confidential. Confidential requirements are mandated in state law. Confidential requirements are mandated in federal law—

**Ms BATES:** I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, I have not received an unconditional withdrawal of all of the comments that the minister has previously made and will continue to make, and I ask that you ask him to withdraw them unconditionally.

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** I rise to a point of order. The minister withdrew the matters that the member found offensive. The minister has continued to address other matters. He has not made further comments directly related to the member for Mudgeeraba.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Mudgeeraba, I believe the minister has provided an unconditional withdrawal. We will check *Hansard*. If that is not the case it will be rectified. Minister, do you have anything further to add?

**Mr DICK:** Yes, I do, Mr Speaker. All Queenslanders expect that when they attend a Queensland public hospital—a statement of fact—that their private health information is kept absolutely confidential. Confidential requirements are mandated in state law. Confidential requirements are mandated in federal law. Confidential requirements are mandated as part of the professional and ethical standards that apply to the experts who work in these most sensitive environments. The member opposite wanted to silence Queensland in the last three years, but I will not be silenced on this issue.

In remarks to the Health and Ambulance Services Committee on 14 October and again on 28 October, the member for Mudgeeraba provided detailed information about particular patients and particular clinical interactions that she had witnessed during her 'shifts' in these hospitals. This included patients attending the emergency department at Gold Coast hospitals as well as forensic health patients receiving treatments in the wards in which the member for Mudgeeraba says she was working. Significant proportions of this private, highly sensitive clinical information was then recounted through various public media outlets. The disclosure of this information—

**Mr Minnikin** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Chatsworth, you are warned under standing order 253A. Please desist from further interjection.

**Mr DICK:** The disclosure of this information identifies highly vulnerable individual patients being treated in the Queensland public hospital system. These actions by the member for Mudgeeraba offend professional nursing standards as well as standards of basic decency. I have a number of serious concerns about this conduct: firstly, whether the member for Mudgeeraba's completion of shifts at the Gold Coast University Hospital and the Robina Hospital are in breach of the conditions placed on her registration; secondly, whether the member has inappropriately divulged confidential and identifying patient information she obtained while purporting to act as an unregistered health practitioner; thirdly, to what extent the member for Mudgeeraba—

**Ms BATES:** I rise to a point of order. I ask that the minister retract that statement. I am not an unregistered health worker. I am a registered general nurse with provisions on my registration which I take very seriously. I think that the minister is just grandstanding here. The minister knows full well that I spoke to him in the stairwell and he knew I was going to do those shifts before I did those shifts. I find it personally offensive and I want him to withdraw all of his comments unconditionally.

**Mr DICK:** I withdraw. I am concerned, as a second point, whether the member has inappropriately divulged confidential and identifying patient information she obtained while purporting to act as an unrestricted health practitioner; thirdly, to what extent the member—

**Ms BATES:** I rise to a point of order. The minister is deliberately misleading the House. I am not an unrestricted registered nurse. I have restrictions on my registration which I am very well aware of. I find the comments personally offensive and I ask that he withdraw.

**Mr SPEAKER:** You have asked for a withdrawal. Minister?

**Mr DICK:** I withdraw. Thirdly, I am concerned about to what extent the member for Mudgeeraba may have disrupted hospital operations which may have resulted—

**Mr Rickuss** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Minister, one moment. Member for Lockyer, you are now warned under standing order 253A. If you continue I will act accordingly. I call the minister.

**Mr DICK:** Thirdly, I am concerned about to what extent the member for Mudgeeraba may have disrupted hospital operations which may have resulted in higher clinical risks for patients at the Gold Coast University and Robina hospitals; and, fourthly, if the member's statement that she is a 'registered nurse'—her words—of over 34 years is an accurate representation of her professional registration and, having regard to Ms Bates' recent interactions with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, whether these are wilful breaches of the title protections of the health practitioner national law. I have today written to the Queensland Health Ombudsman in relation to these issues raised by the conduct of the member for Mudgeeraba.

**Ms BATES:** I rise to a point of order. I find the minister's comments offensive. I find the way that he is approaching this whole situation offensive. He is well aware that he knew I was going to be at that hospital and I ask that he withdraw.

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** I rise to a point of order.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Mudgeeraba, it is not an opportunity for debate. You have asked for it to be withdrawn.

**Ms BATES:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I ask him to withdraw.

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** I rise to a point of order. The member for Mudgeeraba has not asked for these comments to be withdrawn. She has argued about it continually.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The member for Mudgeeraba has asked for a withdrawal on matters she finds personally offensive. Minister, will you withdraw?

**Mr DICK:** I withdraw. I make the point that I have today written to the Queensland Health Ombudsman in relation to these issues raised by the conduct of the member—

**Mr Hart** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Minister, one moment. Member for Burleigh, you are now warned under standing order 253A. If you persist I will act accordingly. Minister, do you have anything further to add?

**Mr DICK:** I have written to the Queensland Health Ombudsman in relation to those matters raised by the conduct of the member for Mudgeeraba to seek a full independent investigation of these matters. Given the conduct of the member for Mudgeeraba, I have also instructed the director-general to urgently strengthen protocols governing the visits of parliamentarians to health facilities to protect members of the public and to prevent the politicisation of the health service and their staff.

**Ms BATES:** I rise to a point of order. I find the comments exceptionally offensive that a member of parliament is going to put anybody in danger in a public hospital facility and I would like him to withdraw.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Mudgeeraba, it is not an opportunity for debate. You have asked for them to be withdrawn.

**Ms BATES:** Thank you, I ask him to withdraw.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Minister, will you withdraw?

**Mr DICK:** I withdraw. Clinical confidence and confidentiality represent the bare minimum that Queenslanders can expect from their public health system. I intend to make sure that these fundamental standards are not put at risk by the conduct of members of this House.