



Speech By  
**Ros Bates**


**MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA**

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Record of Proceedings, 15 September 2015

## **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL**

### **Health and Ambulance Services Committee, Report**

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (9.23 pm): I rise to reflect on the estimates proceedings of the Health and Ambulance Services Committee and inform the House of why the LNP opposition is deeply concerned for hospital and health services in Queensland under this Labor government. Firstly, I acknowledge the chair, the member for Nudgee, for the professionalism with which she executed her role. Throughout the proceedings of 26 August, the opposition asked legitimate and pertinent questions of the government to ensure that the expenditure of the Health portfolio contained in this year's budget was subject to scrupulous review.

At the end of the day, the shadow minister sought a direct reassurance from the director-general that, after the Health payroll debacle of the former Labor government that saw nurses paid incorrectly or not at all, the rollout of new ICT infrastructure at the Sunshine Coast Public University Hospital would not see another ICT bungle. Despite \$9 billion being budgeted for this ICT rollout, we were not given any unequivocal reassurance that this ICT rollout would be successful after the former Labor government's health payroll debacle. As the member for Caloundra said, it remains to be seen whether this will become yet another mess that a future LNP government will have to fix.

In addition, when it comes to mental health the LNP has always sought a bipartisan approach to ensuring best possible outcomes for Queenslanders suffering from mental illness. Unfortunately, under this government and throughout the estimates process this year, we have seen a Labor government make political statements and criticise the previous LNP government without putting forward any clear details in relation to the Mental Health Act review.

In a similar manner, when the opposition asked questions about the direct involvement of the Queensland Nurses' Union in the formation of nurse-patient ratio policy, unfortunately we were provided with no clarification from departmental staff. In particular, we raised concerns that Queensland Health staff had been frequently visiting the QNU as part of nurse-patient ratio policy development, meaning public servants and publicly funded contractors may have been developing QNU or Labor policies at non-government premises. Upon questioning by the member for Caloundra, the director-general refused to detail whether staff members from his department had routinely visited the QNU during the formulation of this very important policy, stating these activities were 'the daily workings of the activity of doing the business'. Queenslanders deserve to know who is involved in the development of their healthcare policies and who is running policy development: the Labor government or the union bosses. Unfortunately, our concerns were not addressed in the estimates proceedings. In fact, despite my attempts to move that documents related to union involvement in policy development be tabled in the interests of transparency, the government voted down that motion in an apparent attempt to hide that information from the public.

In addition, the opposition's concerns surrounding the outsourcing of crucial health services in Queensland hospitals went unaddressed, with little clarification provided on whether the Labor government had reneged on its earlier promises to the contrary and had commenced outsourcing critical patient services. The major concern of the opposition, as we articulated during estimates, is that what is contained in the budget papers does not reflect what the Labor Party promised during the 2015 election campaign and immediately after taking government. In fact, the shadow minister tabled a letter quoting the Premier as saying, 'Previously in Government, Labor had a policy of employment security and no-contracting-out provisions,' going on to say, 'Labor will restore this policy.' That is in stark contrast to the budget papers and, during estimates, the CEO of the Sunshine Coast hospital stated that there are clear cases of outsourcing occurring under this Labor government, with the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service having an outsourced radiation-oncology service. Upon questioning from the opposition, the CEO admitted that under the Labor government outsourcing had occurred as public patients were being routinely transferred to receive care from Ramsay Health Care, in direct contrast to Labor's election pledges. In addition, we heard that vital oncology services in regions throughout Queensland are at risk after this Labor government adopted an approach that favours selective outsourcing, despite its earlier commitments not to outsource vital health services.

The opposition also expressed concern about the recent review of the Lady Cilento Children's Hospital after the minister admitted he had not sought or asked for any documents related to the review. The minister went on to say that he had 'not seen any submissions' and had 'not seen any document' in relation to the review, which would be a matter of great concern to Queenslanders.

Thereafter, the government failed to address the concerns of the opposition in relation to medical cannabis trials initiated by the Labor government. After questioning from the member for Caloundra, the minister was not able to explain the costs of the trials, who will be responsible for their delivery, which state they will be conducted in or provide any concrete details for the benefit of the committee. The cost eventually put forward by the minister of 'probably \$3 million' was vague at best. Queenslanders deserve better after such a major policy announcement by the Premier and the Minister for Health. It is disappointing to see that, despite all the government's talk about medical cannabis trials in Queensland, very little policy detail existed and very little information was available for the committee during estimates.

Of course, of great concern to the residents of the Gold Coast, and my electorate of Mudgeeraba in particular, was the failure of the government to address the opposition's concerns in relation to code black security incidents at the Gold Coast University Hospital. Prior to estimates, the minister's department came back and said that they would unnecessarily divert Queensland Health staff from their duty by providing this information. Unfortunately for the minister, I was able to provide that for him. The average number of code blacks at the Gold Coast hospital was 60 and at the end of the estimates hearing the minister came back with the amount of 62.