




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Public Hospitals, Waiting Times

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (10.05 am): Last week I had the pleasure of formally launching the Palaszczuk government's *Specialist outpatient strategy: improving the patient journey by 2020*. This strategy is supported by an investment of \$361.2 million over four years, which was the single largest health initiative announced in last year's budget. When I became health minister, I discovered that there are over 100,000 people waiting longer than clinically recommended for a specialist outpatient appointment in a Queensland public hospital. I am very pleased to report to the House that a little over a year into our strategy that number has fallen to 55,355. That is a reduction of over 45 per cent.

Our government's commitment has been to take on the challenge of the waiting list for the waiting list, which was a bridge too far for the previous Liberal National Party government. In doing so, we have set out to deliver a strategy that is genuine, balanced and realistic and a strategy that is properly resourced and properly targeted. Our strategy places the patient at the centre of the system. This strategy outlines 11 key investment initiatives to be implemented by 2020. By 2020 we will, among other things: introduce clinical prioritisation criteria, which will provide a standardised approach to the referral process; provide GPs with access to an online service directory, which will help them send their patients to the care best suited to their needs; increase the use of allied health professionals to provide alternative referral pathways so that patients get the most appropriate care; provide more specialist appointments with increased funding to deliver more specialist services; expand telehealth services so that patients living in rural and remote areas will have greater access to specialists without having to travel to a larger centre; and continue to invest in more elective surgeries to help patients get their surgery as soon as possible.

I cannot and will not promise that Queenslanders will never have to wait for an appointment or treatment in a Queensland public hospital. It simply would not be right for me to make such a promise. What we will do as a government is support the extraordinarily talented staff in our state's public health system and continually improve our systems with the aim of ensuring that by 2020 patients receive their appointment or treatment within clinically recommended time frames. Ultimately, the specialist outpatient strategy is about more than just reducing waiting lists, as important as that is; it is about enduring systemic structural change and making life better for the patient by looking at the system through their eyes.