




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Dental Services, Federal Funding

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (9.49 am): On 23 April this year the Turnbull coalition government announced that it was abolishing the National Partnership Agreement on Adult Public Dental Services and the Child Dental Benefits Schedule without agreement from the states and against the advice of peak dental groups. The replacement Child and Adult Public Dental Scheme proposed by the Commonwealth seeks to transfer responsibility for the provision of dental services entirely to the state and will for the first time introduce a cap that would effectively deliver a national \$200 million a year reduction on the schemes it has been designed to replace. Should this scheme be implemented, once the cap is reached the full liability for providing additional dental services would fall upon the state budget.

In 2013 the federal Labor government signed the National Partnership Agreement on Treating More Public Dental Patients with the Newman LNP government which delivered funding certainty and drove down the waiting lists in this state. It is regrettable that that certainty has been jeopardised by the decision of the Turnbull government, made on 23 April this year, to introduce the new scheme—a decision that continues the trend of the federal coalition government to walk away from its responsibilities to fund its fair share of the Queensland health system.

This cut masquerading as reform has been botched from the start. Originally intended to be legislated in July this year, the current scheme was extended to 31 December. That date is fast approaching and still we have no clear indication of what dental funding Queensland will receive in the future. Attempts to legislate the new scheme have now failed on two occasions in the Commonwealth parliament, adding to uncertainty. This confusion is negatively impacting on the ability of our hospital and health services to generate service delivery plans to meet the needs of those requiring dental care in the coming year. It is another example of the chaos and paralysis of the Abbott and Turnbull governments' approach to health, which has been distinguished by ill-considered, clumsily crafted policy on the run that appears to have as its single organising principle punishing the patients of Queensland. Fortunately for the people of Queensland, the Palaszczuk Labor government will continue to fund its fair share of public dental services through the provision of annual funding of \$188 million for dental health services.

I have recently raised these issues with my Commonwealth, state and territory counterparts at the COAG Health Council. I can assure the House that I and all members of the Palaszczuk Labor government will continue to fight for Queensland to ensure that the Turnbull government continues to properly fund public dental services in this state.