




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

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HEALTH LEGISLATION (WAITING LIST INTEGRITY) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (9.37 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Health Legislation (Waiting List Integrity) Amendment Bill. As a registered nurse, I applaud the efforts of the shadow minister for health to add transparency to hospital waiting times in Queensland. This bill will establish the Queensland Health Ombudsman as the independent reviewer of clinical waiting times for Queensland patients in our public health system. It will charge the Health Ombudsman with being an independent auditor of waiting times in an open, transparent and accountable way so that, when it comes to waiting lists, we can get the facts, not politics being consistently thrown into the public sphere by those opposite. This will be achieved by requiring our hospital and health services to provide wait-time data to the Health Ombudsman and by requiring the Health Ombudsman to analyse and publish this data in a timely manner.

The committee's consideration of this bill revealed serious inadequacies in the way in which health times are reported. I raised a number of concerns surrounding how information data is collated by Queensland Health and presented to the minister's office with external checks and balances not existing and the only form of accountability being internal procedures in Queensland Health. It is a little bit like Caesar judging Caesar. This process has been confirmed by the Auditor-General report titled *Emergency department performance reporting*, which mentioned that there was a lack of accountability for accurate and reliable data that leaves the system open to manipulation. This bill will implement a new level of external auditing and transparency that has never existed before under Queensland Health's own internal reporting mechanisms.

Throughout our time in government, under the stewardship of the Leader of the Opposition during his outstanding tenure as minister for health, we worked calmly and methodically to fix the basket case that was Queensland Health under Labor and Anna Bligh and deliver better outcomes for patients. After years of maladministration and neglect, the Health portfolio was finally seeing real results, with the number of patients waiting too long being reduced dramatically. In just three years, Queensland's hospital and health system went from being an undeniable mess under Labor to the best in Australia under the LNP. In fact, when the LNP left office in February 2015—for those of you who were not here—

Mr Rickuss: It was so bad you were going to break it up.

Ms BATES: Exactly. You were going to pull it apart. It was an absolute basket case. Anna Bligh was going to make another big bureaucracy and you had not paid any of the staff. In fact, when the LNP left office in February 2015 the number of patients waiting within the clinically recommended time was at 100 per cent for category 1, 99 per cent for category 2 and 100 per cent for category 3. We cleared the backlog of cochlear implant patients, we cleared the public dental long-wait lists for more than 60,000 Queenslanders, we provided an extra 8,000 procedures over four years and 2,000 extra surgical procedures a year through public-private partnerships, we provided up to 40,000 extra public specialist outpatient services and increased—

Government members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! Those on my right! Everyone has had a pretty good time. Please allow the member for Mudgeeraba to speak.

Ms BATES: We increased engagements with GPs through GP liaison officers at targeted public hospitals. These achievements speak for themselves. It is a testament to the careful management of the LNP that waiting lists were at a level in 2015 that seemed impossible to achieve during the dark days of Labor up to 2012. The importance of this bill should not be underestimated, particularly as now more than ever Queensland is at risk of being taken back to the bad old days of the Labor health system under this government. In one of this Labor government's callous first acts the LNP's wait-time guarantee was scrapped. While the LNP was to guarantee alternative treatment in another public or private hospital for any patient reaching the end of their clinically recommended waiting period, this Labor government scrapped this initiative while providing no alternative.

Mr Ryan interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Morayfield, I will ask you to cease interjecting.

Ms BATES: The member for Morayfield would probably not know this, but back in 2000 when Wendy Edmond was the minister for health there were private hospitals in Queensland who approached the Queensland state government to clear up the backlogs—all the colonoscopies, the gastroscopies, the lumps and bumps, the biopsies, all of those—and they did not do a thing about it. They would not come at it back then and the list got bigger and bigger and bigger. I know this because I was negotiating it.

One of the callous acts of this government was to scrap the wait-time guarantee. The guarantee was alternative treatment in another public or a private hospital for any patient reaching the end of their clinically recommended waiting period. This Labor government scrapped this initiative while providing no alternative. Despite professing to be an open and consultative government, this Labor government ignored the will of this parliament and refused to reinstate the wait-time guarantee even after a motion in this House was successful against the Labor government. It was the will of this parliament that the wait-time guarantee be reinstated to ensure patients get their surgery on time, but this Labor government chose to ignore that motion. This petty political agenda means more Queensland patients will miss out on getting surgery on time despite impassioned pleas from doctors, patients and the Australian Medical Association Queensland, as well as the will of the Queensland parliament.

Within months we have already seen hundreds of Queenslanders denied their right to surgery on time while emergency department treatment rates were dropping back to unacceptable levels after the LNP had steadily improved the performance of our EDs when in government. It is becoming clear that when it comes to ensuring patients are seen on time in Queensland this government is frozen at the wheel. It is a do-nothing, say-nothing, be-nothing, know-nothing government which is more interested in scrapping LNP initiatives than coming up with its own—or actually pinching our initiatives and calling them their own. Queenslanders did not vote for this.

This bill seeks to mitigate the damage being done by the Labor government. It is an open and transparent way to allay patient concerns and ensure everyone is aware of just how much or how little the health system is delivering for Queenslanders. It is for these reasons that I will be supporting the bill.