




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Health Services

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (9.55 am): One of the greatest challenges faced by our health system is the pressure placed upon it by rising demand. We on this side of the House we remain committed to the principles of accessible and universal health care. Unlike the LNP, we do not believe that your health check should be dependent on your chequebook. Our party has always fought to ensure that the most disadvantaged and vulnerable of our citizens are not denied the basic human right of decent health care.

There is no doubt that the quality of our state's health system encourages people to use it, particularly as private insurance seems to be slipping beyond the reach of many Australians—most notably older Australians on fixed incomes who have a disproportionate need for health services as they age. Demand continues to increase. Last year, elective surgery was up over three per cent. Emergency department presentations were up four per cent. Demand for a specialist outpatient appointment rose 10 per cent. Demand for ambulance services rose five per cent. An extra 66,000 calls were made to 000 seeking assistance from the Queensland Ambulance Service, an increase of nine per cent.

These were challenges that our predecessors met by cutting 4,400 staff from the public health workforce. They apparently thought that the best way to handle increasing demand was to sack 1,800 nurses and midwives. The Palaszczuk government, however, will not turn its back on the people of Queensland. As the challenge of demand rises, we are working hard to rise to this challenge.

There were over 1.7 million presentations to a public hospital emergency department last financial year in Queensland. Despite this unprecedented level of demand, 79 per cent of those presentations were seen within the clinically recommended four-hour time frame. We are also working hard to reduce waiting lists. Despite a very significant increase in referrals, the list of those waiting for a specialist outpatient appointment has fallen by more than 40 per cent.

Our staff are committed to meeting all the seen in-time targets across all three categories for elective surgeries, where our median wait times remain the best in the nation. Increasingly, demand will continue to place pressure on performance, something that will be an ongoing challenge in the months and years ahead. We will continue to invest in mental health, in preventive health, in sexual health, in public education, in employing more paramedics and in putting more ambulances on the road.

I want to thank most sincerely our hardworking hospital and ambulance staff for the work they do right across Queensland. They work at the front line of health care, and they will continue to have our support as we face this ongoing challenge of demand into the future. Because of federal coalition health cuts, the path ahead will be harder, the climb will be steeper, as we are forced to do more with less. I again call on the Leader of the Opposition to join the government in condemning these cuts to ensure that Queenslanders continue to get the health services they need.