




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

Record of Proceedings, 7 September 2017

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Health

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (10.05 am): Honourable members will remember the turmoil and conflict that engulfed the Health portfolio during the years of the Newman government as cuts were imposed by the member for Clayfield when he was the Treasurer. Let me remind members opposite of the 4,400 staff cut from Queensland Health, including 1,800 midwives, attacking the beating and compassionate heart of our healthcare system—our nurses and our midwives. It was a government that was at war with its own workforce; it was a government that cut staff from preventative health, patient safety and mental health without any regard for the consequences. Trust between Queensland Health staff and the government was shattered. Essential non-government organisations faced oblivion due to cancelled funding contracts, namely, community groups that helped men and women dealing with stillbirth, groups that helped terminal cancer patients, and groups that helped families dealing with challenging health conditions like muscular dystrophy, asthma and epilepsy. All those groups felt the razor of the member for Clayfield when he was Treasurer. All those organisations faced cuts led by Campbell Newman's cutter-in-chief, the member for Clayfield.

Bit by bit, the Palaszczuk government has been repairing the damage of the member for Clayfield. We have been putting back together our health system. We are investing in front-line services and staff to ensure that our health system meets the needs of an ageing and growing population. Our investment is paying dividends. When we came to government, 104,000 people were waiting longer than clinically recommended for a specialist outpatient appointment and, despite year-on-year growth in referrals of 10 per cent, that figure is now down to just over 38,000, a reduction of 64 per cent. This is a remarkable achievement that would not have been possible without government investment and the dedication and commitment of our hardworking Queensland Health staff.

However, there is one achievement that I am particularly proud of, that is, the reversal of the member for Clayfield's war on nurses and midwives. I am pleased to report to the House that over the past two financial years we have recruited 3,443 new graduates in nursing and midwifery. That is a record-breaking nurse graduate recruitment program. I am pleased to outline to the House how every part of Queensland is the beneficiary—

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr DICK: I take the interjection from the member for Kawana. We are paying our staff because one cannot pay them if one sacks them. Every hospital and health service has benefitted.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Thank you, members.

Mr DICK: One cannot be paid if one does not have a job as a nurse or midwife. I am pleased to outline to the House how every part of Queensland is a beneficiary. Every hospital and health service has benefitted from our recruitment of nurse graduates: the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health

Service, 221 nursing and midwifery graduates; Central Queensland, 123; Central West, 27; Children's Health Queensland, 108; the Darling Downs, 206; the Gold Coast, 414; Mackay, 107; Metro North, 840; Metro South, 575; the north-west, 47; south-west, 49; the Sunshine Coast, 180; the Torres and Cape, 18; Townsville, 251; West Moreton, 179; and the Wide Bay where we will be governing from next week, 98 new graduate nurses and midwives.

I welcome each and every one of them to our system and I wish them a long and satisfying career in our health system. They are living examples that out of the wreckage of the Newman-Nicholls years the Palaszczuk Labor government is rebuilding the front line of health care in Queensland to build a better future for all Queenslanders.