




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NUDGE

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Federal Budget, Health and Education

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (12.13 pm): One of the most important hallmarks of any government is how they deliver the services Queenslanders need and depend on most when they are at their most vulnerable. Last week the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services, Cameron Dick, visited my electorate to announce a new 24-hour ambulance station and a new emergency and fleet management precinct for the Queensland Ambulance Service in Geebung, made possible with \$13 million in Palaszczuk government funding. The addition of a new station will enhance the delivery of prehospital emergency health services to Brisbane's northern suburbs and help the service to meet the increasing rates of QAS callouts in metro north over the past 12 months. This significant new investment is part of an ongoing commitment by our government to invest in the front-line services that Queenslanders need most following the severe cuts by the former LNP government, which degraded essential services in communities across the state, including my own.

Since coming to government, in the Metro North Local Ambulance Service Network that services my electorate, our government has delivered 35 full-time ambulance officer positions, 27 replacement vehicles and four additional vehicles. The new 24-hour ambulance station will see up to an additional five ambulance vehicles and 17 paramedics located onsite. This investment in and strengthening of front-line services is a story repeated across the state, with thousands of additional doctors, nurses, teachers, police, fire, ambulance and child safety officers employed across Queensland in our first two years in office.

We know of the critical role government workers play in our community, which was recently highlighted in the response to Tropical Cyclone Debbie and the severe flooding that followed. I pay tribute to those workers, as many in this House have already done. I am proud to be a member of a government that has rebuilt those essential services, with nine out of every 10 government workers in front-line or front-line-support roles. I am proud to be a member of a government that is investing in the services vulnerable Queenslanders need most in mental health, in preventive health, in public education and in reducing wait times across our state.

However, while we continue to provide record funding to front-line services and while we remain committed to the principles of accessible and universal health care, in stark contrast the federal LNP government has cut national funding arrangements, slashing funding to public hospitals, dental and mental health services and aged care. I note that this morning the health minister outlined cuts in the order of \$10 million from mental health services, \$216 million from aged care over four years and many other significant cuts that will hurt our communities. If the Turnbull LNP government continues to cut public health funding in tonight's budget, Queenslanders will wait longer or miss out on receiving vital health treatment.

It is not just health that is in the firing line. Every Australian child, no matter where they live, deserves the very best education. As parents, it is the single greatest investment we make in our children and, as policymakers, in the citizens of this state. We are investing not only in more teachers and teacher aides but also in the infrastructure that our schools need to provide the very best opportunities for Queensland students to shine. Once again, I gratefully acknowledge the recent announcement of \$6 million to Wavell State High School in my electorate for a much needed new performing arts hall.

In stark contrast, under the federal LNP government's new education funding proposal, Queensland state schools will be \$300 million worse off. The Catholic education system will reportedly be worse off. The tertiary education sector will also take a \$2.8 billion hit in the form of a two-year efficiency dividend, an increase in course fees of between \$2,000 and \$3,500 per student and a significantly lowered repayment threshold. Students in Australia are already among the highest contributors to the cost of their own university education. Those cuts will hurt young Queenslanders. They are short-sighted and they undermine the national and Queensland innovation and skills agenda to keep highly skilled jobs in Australia and Australia competitive in a global economy.

I appreciate that difficult decisions must be made and that responsible government cannot be all things to all people, but we must be a safety net for those who need it most. Since our election in January 2015, we have been resolute in our commitment to restore and invest in the front-line services that Queenslanders depend on most, while taking a disciplined approach to economic management—an approach recognised recently with an improved outlook by ratings agency Moody's. We have a vision for Queensland where every member of our community can access quality education services, where health care is accessible and universal, and where the policies of government support economic growth and opportunities, rather than further entrench disadvantage and disparity.