




Speech By
Ros Bates

MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

Record of Proceedings, 7 March 2018

MOTION: DISTRIBUTION OF GST

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (12.07 pm): We have just had a conga line of Labor ministers blaming everybody else, including Canberra, for their own failures. Quite frankly, these ministers need to get on and do their jobs. That is what they are there for. That is what they get paid the big bucks for, so go and do your job and stop blaming everybody else. It has been barely three months since we saw the crucial Health portfolio handed over to the member for Murrumbidgee. Already we have seen crisis after crisis as Labor's reckless mismanagement of the health system is putting patients at risk.

In December Queenslanders saw an ongoing saga unfold over an appointment of the clinical director of mental health at the Cairns Hospital. We saw reports that this man was running for a \$400,000 a year role at Cairns Hospital, all while a quick search of his work history on Google revealed he was banned as a company director for seven years in the UK. This ban occurred after he had failed to adequately safeguard patients' wellbeing and safety. But where was the Minister for Health during this first major test of his leadership? He was ducking for cover. He was refusing to reassure Queenslanders that the system was not slipping—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, members! Member for Mudgeeraba, I am listening very closely to your contribution because I am looking at the motion in front of me and whilst it does have reference to health matters, I would like to hear a bit more about the core of the motion.

Ms BATES: Sure. I am talking about all of the waste, particularly around what we have already seen over the last couple of days in terms of the waste on the ICT dashboard, which was something that was implemented by the former LNP government and directly because of an ICT audit across whole of government which showed billions of dollars worth of waste. Nobody in Queensland will ever forget the Health payroll debacle—the \$1.25 billion Health payroll debacle that the Labor government brought back from Germany for us thanks to Robbie Schwarten.

We know that there are still nurses who are suffering because of the Health payroll debacle. We know that this government is still pursuing nurses for unpaid amounts. While this government is talking about Queensland getting its fair share of funding from the GST, we know that former Labor governments, particularly the Gillard Labor government, slashed Queensland Health funding by \$103 million. I refer to the following article in the *Courier-Mail* of 21 February 2013 with the heading 'Gillard talks tough on federal funding for state hospitals, threatens to withhold \$234 million from Queensland Government.'

Mrs Frecklington: Where was Anastacia Palaszczuk?

Ms BATES: Where was Anastacia?

Mr SPEAKER: Members will be referred to by their correct title.

Ms BATES: Sorry, the Queensland Premier. The article states—

AMAQ president Alex Markwell said the average patient 'didn't care where the money comes from'.

'They just want to know that when they go to hospital, they'll get the treatment they need,' Dr Markwell said.

This article stated further—

The Gillard Government slashed Queensland health funding last December by \$103 million when it revised population estimates.

We know that we had a federal Labor government that had a history of playing games and we now have a Queensland government that has a history of blaming everybody else but itself. The ministers of this government need to stop hiding behind media spin. We have seen the Minister for Health on a roadshow around Queensland blaming everybody else but his own government for the failings in Queensland Health—'It is the federal government's fault', 'The dog ate my homework', 'It's the flu season'. It is every other reason for the fact that we are now going back to the bad old days of Queensland Health.

This week we saw that this minister cannot even run his own office. Why would Queenslanders have any faith that he can run effectively our public health system? All he has been doing is blaming the federal government. He cannot blame the federal government for ambulance ramping being back on the rise. That is not a federal government issue.

Waiting times in our emergency departments are blowing out because of bed block in our hospitals. They are not blowing out because the federal government is not providing funding. Under the watch of the former minister for health, ambulance ramping came back. Our emergency departments are in all sorts of crises. Our nurses, doctors and paramedics need more assistance with these wait times. As I said, no-one will ever forget the \$1.25 billion Health payroll debacle or the Tahitian prince. All of that money was wasted and, nine years later, this government is still chasing nurses. As the Leader of the Opposition said, this ICT blowout alone would pay for the employment of 2,300 nurses, 2,350 police officers, 3,600 fireys, 3,200 ambos and 5,465 ice rehabilitation beds.

We also have the Minister for Health blaming the federal government for our EDs being supposedly full because GP costs are going up. Unfortunately for the minister, the new Medicare data for July and December 2017 showed that Queenslanders received almost \$750,000 fully bulk-billed GP services more than they received the previous year. You are saying that the federal coalition government has not delivered, but it delivered almost \$3 million more in free services for Queenslanders than federal Labor delivered when it was last in government.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Mudgeeraba, could you please direct your comments through the chair. I would also like to hear a little bit more about the core of this motion.

Ms BATES: Certainly. I am talking about Labor blaming us—blaming everybody else and the GST. We have a Premier who, on the radio, could not even tell us what the GST rate was. The government cannot keep blaming the federal government for everything that has happened. It has a role to play. This government is given money by the federal government. It needs to get on and do its job. Under Labor, we do not want to see Queensland Health going back to the bad old days. We want to make sure that the ministers of this government are accountable.

The LNP stands up for Queensland. In terms of health, it has always stood up for Queensland. We want to have a world-class health system. All Queenslanders want to have that. Queenslanders do not want a Labor government blaming everybody else for what is happening in Queensland. This government has the responsibility for the Queensland Health portfolio. It needs to make sure that it is delivering the services that Queenslanders need.

On 19 January, the independent administrator for the National Health Funding Pool issued a statement on this issue, which is being debated as part of this GST argument. That is an independent process. All states, territories and the Commonwealth have been advised that these independent bodies are undertaking this independent investigation. All governments across Australia should let the independent bodies do their job and identify any of these so-called anomalies and make corrections where needed. The Queensland government should support the work of these independent bodies, which report to all states, territories and the Commonwealth, not just Queensland.

The Queensland Minister for Health is simply making up the numbers. There is no missing money. He is embarrassing himself. The truth is that the Commonwealth funding for Queensland hospitals is increasing to record levels every year. In fact, federal funding has grown from less than \$2.8 billion under the previous federal Labor government to more than \$4.8 billion under the current federal coalition government in 2020 to 2021. That is record funding under the Turnbull government. That means more doctors, more nurses and more surgeries for Queensland.

Meanwhile, in its last budget the Palaszczuk government cut funding to Queensland hospitals by \$63.8 million. We have the facts in front of us. We know that this government is not doing its job. It is blaming everybody else. As I mentioned before, it is, 'The dog ate my homework', 'It's the flu season.' The flu season finished 12 months ago. Why are we still having backlogs in our hospitals? Those backlogs have nothing to do with the federal government and everything to do with the incompetence

of this government and its mismanagement of our health system. We are seeing ambulance ramping to record levels. We are seeing dental health waitlists blowing out. It is all because of mismanagement under this government. The ministers should stop blaming the federal government and get on and do the job that the people in Queensland pay them for and stop blaming everybody else.