



Speech By  
**Ros Bates**


**MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA**

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## **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL**

### **Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee, Report**

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (4.19 pm): Queenslanders deserve a world-class public health system that is not being delivered by the Palaszczuk Labor government. Queensland Health represents the largest budget allocation of any portfolio and yet it was clear that government members were more interested in running interference to protect the embattled health minister.

Disappointingly, though unsurprisingly, the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee hearings lacked any openness and transparency. Government members abused standing orders and prevented a free-flowing examination of the minister's performance. Former Labor Speaker John Mickel was right when he labelled the whole process a 'protection racket'.

In the entire first 90-minute session, the LNP were granted only 20 minutes of questions. This completely undermines the entire budget estimates hearing process. When I did manage to get a question past the Labor committee members guarding the minister it became blatantly obvious that, under this government's watch, we now have a public health system in crisis. On the minister's watch, ambulance ramping is increasing, elective surgery wait times are blowing out, our emergency departments are overcrowded, promised hospital upgrades are years away from completion and we have a number of high-profile corruption investigations involving Queensland Health, including the Heart Valve Bank tissue debacle.

The Heart Valve Bank, which had already been shut down due to internal corruption and bullying allegations, provided cancerous tissue for cardiac surgery to three babies and a teenager. When asked about this situation, the minister still refused to take responsibility. It was made clear during the hearing that the minister has not even bothered to personally contact the families of the children involved. When the Heart Valve Bank tissue debacle was raised again in the second session, the minister refused to allow questions on the topic to the Chief Health Officer. It turns out the protection racket also involves ministers protecting senior bureaucrats. Nevertheless, we were eventually able to put questions to Dr Young, who revealed that the tissue bungle only came to the attention of Queensland Health as a result of the investigation that Metro South HHS had undertaken following complaints raised by staff at the Heart Valve Bank.

We then questioned the director-general on Labor's proposal to change the name of Lady Cilento Children's Hospital. He was unable to offer the committee an approximate cost of the name change, despite stating that Queensland Health had looked at the potential costs. The LNP maintains this would be a decision which disrespects Lady Cilento and her family after all that she contributed to health in Queensland as a leading female medical pioneer.

It also shows that Labor have their priorities completely wrong. Instead of improving front-line health services for our sickest kids, they are wasting their time and taxpayers' money with a name change. In the wake of the announced plan to change the name there was mass public outcry and disbelief, along with shocking stories from patients of Lady Cilento Children's Hospital.

How could we forget Ryan's story? His mother, Louise, shared his story on Facebook which then went viral. He was forced to receive his chemotherapy treatment in a kitchenette because there were no beds available at the hospital. His chemo pump was plugged in next to a microwave for goodness sake. Changing the hospital's name is not a priority; better hospital services are.

We next addressed our concerns with the rollout of the integrated electronic Medical Record system in Queensland. Doctors and other health staff have raised major concerns about the technology. It was confirmed at estimates that there have been 21 incidents in the last year. We are increasingly concerned that these outages and incidents of this type put patient safety at risk—even more so after it was confirmed by the minister at estimates that there is a Crime and Corruption Commission investigation underway into the rollout of the ieMR.

In relation to corruption investigations, it was confirmed that Queensland Health is dealing with 44 matters involving alleged corrupt conduct of departmental employees. While the minister tries to downplay the severity of these investigations, it is important to remember the Tahitian prince. He was only one person, but he owed Queensland Health \$18 million. What damage have 44 allegedly corrupt individuals managed to do?

The LNP has grave concerns for the future of maternity services in rural and regional Queensland. At estimates the minister finally confirmed that Chinchilla Hospital is still on maternity bypass and has been since December 2017. It was clear in the minister's answers that Labor has no interest in or intention of reopening closed birthing services, including at Theodore Hospital. Queenslanders deserve a world-class health service, no matter where they live.

Despite Labor's attempts to obstruct and influence the estimates hearing process, I believe we were successful in drawing attention to Labor and the Minister for Health's ineptitude. Our hardworking nurses, doctors and paramedics need more support on the front line to improve patient care. Queenslanders deserve better than a Premier and a minister more interested in playing politics than patient care.