




Speech By
Samuel O'Connor

MEMBER FOR BONNEY

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MOTION

Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (5.11 pm): It is a great pleasure to speak to this motion moved by my Gold Coast colleague the member for Mudgeeraba. I am proud to have the Gold Coast University Hospital in my electorate and to represent the many men and women who work tirelessly to make sure patients and their families are well cared for across our city. I also have the health and knowledge precinct in my electorate, which has the potential to be a hub of innovation and excellence in health related industries if, and hopefully when, the government manages to actually lock in some tenants, but that is another issue entirely.

What is clear to me as the local member is that the minister is not willing to support the staff at the Gold Coast University Hospital to the extent that they need. In their most recent annual report, service performance shows there is a clear lack of support for our front-line personnel and they are struggling to meet the markers set for them. Over 46 per cent of targets were not met, with a number being significantly off the mark. Let's look at some of the worst—things that the minister should be addressing instead of renaming hospitals in Brisbane.

For category 2, where it is recommended that patients are seen within 10 minutes, there was a target of 80 per cent but an actual of only 57 per cent. For category 3, which is patients to be seen within 30 minutes, there was a target of 75 per cent and an achievement rate of only 46 per cent. One thing that constituents raise with me regularly is wait lists. On the Gold Coast we have a median wait time for elective surgery of 40 days despite the target being 25. Another one, the patient off-stretcher target, was 90 per cent, but both Robina and GCUH achieved just over 70 per cent. This is by no means a reflection on the staff on the ground. They need the right structures, support and resources to hit these targets and that firmly comes back to the government.

The doctors, nurses and other health workers I know and whom I have been privileged to meet during my time as their MP work as hard as they can to care for their patients. They are stretched to the limit and that falls back on the minister's priorities and the resources he provides them. Another example of the lack of support is the rising number of incidents in which staff have copped abuse over the last few years. Our Gold Coast hospitals have shown an increase of 56 per cent in this category since 2016. Despite that, the promised police beat at the hospital has long been forgotten. A legacy for the precinct that should have been left from the Commonwealth Games has never been realised.

With outrageous statistics like these, why would the government not put in place a support mechanism like this when it is clearly needed? I know police go through the hospital all the time on other jobs, but workers there tell me that having a permanent police presence would vastly improve their safety. It would make it easier to report incidents, especially late at night or in the early hours of the morning, instead of having to travel to Southport station after a long shift. Even the minister's rhetoric around Queensland's record health budgets is a farce when every year every government, no matter

the political persuasion, will deliver a record budget. In 2012-13 there was a 7½ per cent increase to the Gold Coast health service, in 2013-14 there was a 4.5 per cent increase and in 2014-15 there was a six per cent increase.

The motion before us also mentions the recent concerning incident involving the Gold Coast home support program. When the minister is ready and willing to throw his staff under a bus when it was he who missed something within his own department, it is clear that in the end it is his job that concerns him most, not the staff or the patients. In the end, it is his portfolio, and he needs to take responsibility and control for what happens in it. That is a common theme that we see within the government where they are more than happy to send out a public servant in the place of a minister or for a minister to just not appear at a press conference.

It is astounding to think that this is happening in our hospitals and health services and the minister has been more focused on a name change. Not only has he done this with so little care for the Cilento family; but what is more concerning is the fact that this is where his priority lies. Rather than changing a name, why not look at what is going on within our hospitals? The minister needs to ensure all patients are receiving the best care possible and they can work out the branding of that hospital later. What is the point of it? Why would we spend all these taxpayers' dollars to just change the name? Given the other competing priorities, it is hard to believe that this is at the forefront of his mind. This is a minister who is more interested in spin than substance and who does not give our frontline workers the support they so desperately need. I commend the motion to the House.