




Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles
MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

Record of Proceedings, 7 March 2018

MOTION: DISTRIBUTION OF GST

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (11.36 am): The LNP in Canberra wants to cut Queensland's GST distribution by \$1.5 billion so they can sandbag their seats in Western Australia. It was not possible to tell from the Leader of the Opposition's contribution whether or not she supports that. She does not want to have to choose between Queensland and her bosses in Canberra, but the problem for her is that she has to choose; she cannot have it both ways. She may not have had to choose while she gave that rambling speech and did not tell us whether or not she supported the motion, but she will have to choose when the LNP comes to vote on this important motion.

If members opposite vote against this motion, they will be standing with their federal colleagues and turning their backs on Queensland. They are all paid to advocate for Queensland, but instead they are backing Western Australia. The LNP members opposite need to learn that the decisions they make have consequences. The decision they may make in a little while to send Queensland taxpayers' funds to WA will affect Queenslanders. The Premier made very clear at COAG the impact that ripping \$1.5 billion out of the state budget would have. It would be like losing 5,000 teachers, 5,000 nurses, 3,000 police officers and 1,135 firefighters.

Let's take my portfolio, Health, on its own for a moment. The amount of \$1.5 billion buys an awful lot of health care. A cut of \$1.5 billion in GST revenue to Queensland is the equivalent of about 12,880 nurses—more than one in every three nurses in Queensland. Surely the federal government does not want us to sack one in every three nurses working here in Queensland. We do know that the LNP likes to sack nurses. They did sack 1,800 when they were last in government here in Queensland—and midwives. The member for Mudgeeraba should know; she was the first nurse sacked by the Newman government. However, Labor does not do that. Labor does not sack nurses like the LNP do; we employ nurses—thousands more of them since we were elected.

If we are not going to sack nurses, let's look at some other options. The amount of \$1.5 billion is about equal to the total Health budgets for West Moreton, Mackay and Wide Bay combined. Malcolm Turnbull is saying, 'Sorry, Ipswich. I know you are expecting a hospital upgrade, but the LNP federal government wants us to shut you down for a year. Hey, Mackay. Maybe you could come back next year for that urgent emergency department treatment you need. I'm sorry, Hervey Bay, no hospitals for you this year.'

It costs more to deliver health care in a decentralised state like Queensland. That may be hard for the LNP to imagine because they do not have many regional seats—hardly any north of Wide Bay—but for their benefit let me tell you that, unlike other states, more than 50 per cent of the population lives outside the capital. Providing public hospital services to acute patients can be up to 40 per cent higher in some of the very remote parts of Queensland compared to Brisbane. It is about 1,600 kilometres from the hospital on the Gold Coast to the hospital in Mount Isa, but that is more than twice the distance between Sydney and Melbourne. It is further from Brisbane to the Torres Strait islands than it is from

Sydney to Auckland. Yes, the funding arrangements in place are complex, but they reflect the reality of delivering health care in a state like Queensland compared to Victoria or New South Wales. That is precisely why the GST is divvied up the way it is.

It is not just our hospital services that are being squeezed out by Malcolm Turnbull and the LNP federal government: the federal government plays a significant role in funding public dental services for Queenslanders. In the last full financial year Queensland Health delivered more than 950,000 dental appointments in clinics across the state. Our oral health teams work extremely hard to ensure that patients receive treatment within the recommended waiting times. The majority of patients on the general dental waiting list are being seen within the clinically recommended time frame. Under the current National Partnership Agreement on Public Dental Services for Adults offered by Malcolm Turnbull and the LNP government, Queensland's funding for dental services will be cut by \$8.7 million. That is a cut of nearly 30 per cent. Make no mistake: this cut will impact Queenslanders across the state, reduce services and put increased pressure on our public dental system.

In fact, the impact of this funding cut is already being experienced across Queensland. I know this because members of the opposition have written to tell me about it. Here is just one example. The opposition Health spokesperson has written to me about a local dental practice that is seeking to be included in the dental voucher program. People who are on the waiting list for public dental treatment are offered vouchers to go and get their treatment at a private clinic. This program was established through a partnership agreement that was struck with the federal Labor government. It has been very effective in making sure that Queenslanders get the dental treatment they need within clinically recommended times.

As a result of Malcolm Turnbull's funding cuts, more and more health and hospital services will be unable to offer these vouchers. This will have a profound impact on our waiting lists. Under the current funding provided by Malcolm Turnbull, Queensland Health has estimated that by 30 June 2019 the number of long waits on the waiting list will increase by 2,000 people. Put simply, the new deal does not provide enough funding for Queensland to continue to maintain the current performance target of seeing all patients on the adult general dental waiting list within a two-year period.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to the ongoing funding of public dental services; however, a long-term funding commitment from the Commonwealth is crucial to ensure a sustainable system. It is all well and good for members of the opposition to lobby me on behalf of their constituents like the member for Mudgeeraba, the member for Lockyer, the member for Burleigh and the member for Oodgeroo, who have all written to me in relation to dental services, but none of them are lobbying their federal colleagues in Canberra to make sure that Queenslanders get the funding they deserve. The Turnbull government is coming for free health care at every turn. They continue to owe our public hospitals hundreds of millions of dollars for services already delivered. Yesterday I advised the House that KPMG found the Commonwealth owes Queensland hospitals—

Mr Janetzki interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Toowoomba South—it is normally the member for Toowoomba North—your interjections are not being taken. I ask you to desist.

Dr MILES: Yesterday I advised the House that KPMG found the Commonwealth owes Queensland hospitals \$1.12 billion. Despite this there continues to be nothing but silence from the member for Nanango and her Health spokesperson. Yesterday on ABC Radio the Leader of the Opposition was asked if she had called federal health minister Greg Hunt to ask about Queensland's fair share of health funding. She was asked three times. What was her response? 'Well, no, I haven't picked up the phone to Greg Hunt.' Not in the 12 days since she received my letter, not at any time this year in response to countless media reports—at no time has she bothered to call the federal health minister and make sure that Queensland hospitals are getting their fair share. It is not that difficult, member for Nanango. I have his number; I will text it to you. I will even call the number for you. You can talk to him. Maybe you could write a letter like the member for Kennedy did, or maybe you could stand up and be strong like the LNP opposition leader in Victoria—

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, please bring your comments back through the chair.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister for Education and Leader of the Opposition, you have had an opportunity to speak. I would ask both of you to desist.

Mr Bennett interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Burnett, you are warned under the standing orders.

Dr MILES: It is not that difficult for the Leader of the Opposition to make sure that Queenslanders' tax dollars are going back to public health care, as they rightly expect. Instead, she wastes our time on stunts and distractions because she does not care if people in her electorate or right across this state can receive the vital surgeries they need within the recommended time frames. She does not care if our emergency departments are overworked and overstretched because hospitals cannot increase staffing. All she cares about is protecting her mates in Canberra and covering up for them and their agenda of vicious cuts to public services and now cuts to our share of the GST. It is time she took a stand for Queenslanders. The Leader of the Opposition and the LNP need to choose here today: do they stand with Malcolm Turnbull, or do they stand with the people of Queensland?