



Speech By  
**Cynthia Lui**


**MEMBER FOR COOK**

---

Record of Proceedings, 15 October 2019

## **MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

### **Primary Healthcare Centres**

 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (2.31 pm): For the majority of Queenslanders the nearest hospital is typically a short drive away. However, if you live on one of the outer islands in the Torres Strait, your nearest hospital is a plane ride away and, even then, time is a huge factor. As a former health worker, I worked during a time when we had doctors visit once a month and nurses fortnightly but no-one was ever stationed there permanently. This meant that I had to carry out on-call duties with a doctor sitting in Thursday Island Hospital or a nurse on Masig Island giving me specific instructions via the telephone.

I want members to imagine a typical Sunday afternoon on a remote island. I had just been to church and about to sit down for lunch when I got a call to see someone who had an asthma attack. As I do, I grabbed the keys to the primary healthcare centre and drove to the clinic as fast as I could to meet the patient. As soon as I arrived, I noted my patient's clammy appearance and with obvious signs of distress and shortness of breath. I immediately settled my patient into the emergency room to check their vital signs—temperature, pulse, respiratory rate and blood pressure. I knew this was not a case of an asthma attack as the vital signs were telling me a different story. His blood pressure was ridiculously high and his pulse was irregular, slow and very weak. I did his ECG and it showed severe abnormalities in his heart rhythm. This person was at risk of a massive cardiac arrest.

This is one of many situations I have faced and the feeling is indescribable. You have the whole life of the person in the emergency bed in your hands, the doctor on the other end of the phone telling you everything you need to do to keep this person alive and a chopper that will take roughly 25 minutes to get to you for an emergency medical evacuation.

I would like to pay a special tribute to my fellow Torres Strait Islands health workers past and present. Like me, Torres Strait primary healthcare workers were stationed in communities 24/7 and were often the first point of contact for ongoing intervention and prevention and, at times, faced the most acute emergency situations. It has been a long time coming but to you I say: kaima eso, au esou and my heartfelt thank you for your tireless efforts, dedication and commitment to your families and community. I also acknowledge the doctors, nurses and other health professionals past and present who were instrumental in supporting health workers on the outer islands and coordinating effective service delivery under very challenging circumstances.

In 2018, the Minister for Health, Steven Miles, and I visited primary healthcare centres on Saibai, Moa and Masig islands where we toured the facilities and met with Queensland Health workers to hear firsthand of their experience with service provision in remote communities. If in 2006 I had been told that in 2018 I would be the member for Cook taking the Minister for Health around to visit different primary healthcare centres in the Torres Strait, I would have laughed it off as 'pie in the sky'. Today, I am absolutely thrilled to report that the Palaszczuk government committed \$17.4 million for the refurbishment and upgrading of four Torres Strait island primary healthcare centres, with work beginning this month.

Work will start first on Dauan Island, followed progressively by Ugar, Poruma and Masig, with completion of all four island primary healthcare centres expected by December 2020, thus creating 25 full-time construction jobs. This investment will allow for the refurbishment of the existing primary healthcare centres and a new building extension containing a treatment room, a consultation room, staff amenities, disabled access, a new main entry lobby, reception and manager's office, along with dedicated emergency vehicle parking.

In addition, Ugar and Dauan islands each will receive two studio style staff accommodation units with shared staff laundry and parking, while Poruma Island will also get a two-bedroom, self-contained staff accommodation unit to accommodate a growing range of visiting health professionals delivering more specialised services to the island communities in the near future. I stand proud to represent a government that is here for all people no matter where they live in Queensland. The Palaszczuk government believes in delivering for the betterment of all Queenslanders because we are a listening government, unlike those opposite who just pay lip-service.

**Ms Bates:** I was up there last week.

**Ms LUI:** To the member for Mudgeeraba, I heard on the grapevine that she was on Saibai Island visiting the community and the primary healthcare centres.

**Ms Bates** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Mudgeeraba.

**Mr Healy:** You didn't know?

**Ms LUI:** That is because I was not told where she was. My work across the Cook electorate is about delivering for the needs of the community, not paying lip-service, which those opposite seem to do all the time.