




Speech By
Meaghan Scanlon

MEMBER FOR GAVEN

Record of Proceedings, 20 August 2019

MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Aged-Care Sector

 **Ms SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (2.43 pm): The aged-care sector has become a national disgrace and recently my electorate has been at the centre of this failure. I have been talking about this issue for some time now and I will continue to advocate until real action is taken. On 21 September 2018 the *Gold Coast Bulletin* published an article, which I will table.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Gold Coast Bulletin*, dated 21 September 2018, titled 'Staffing shortage "unsafe"' [1286](#).

In the article titled 'Staffing shortage unsafe' I commented on a statewide audit which showed the electorate of Moncrieff had the worst hours of care provided to residents in the state. On 16 November 2018 again the *Gold Coast Bulletin* published an article, which I table, titled 'Elderly deserve better level of care', which outlines the issues I was hearing from aged-care staff on the ground at the time.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Gold Coast Bulletin*, dated 16 November 2018, titled 'Our elderly deserve better level of care' [1287](#).

On 30 October last year I stood in this chamber and articulated my concerns as a matter of public interest in relation to the insufficient staffing levels and associated elder neglect. On 9 May this year I spoke in this parliament about the impact that privatisation of the aged-care sector is having on our public hospitals. I started a petition almost a year ago now calling on the federal government to ensure that the aged-care sector has a safe level of staffing. I articulated my concern that the privatisation of this sector means operators are propping up their profits by cutting corners and shifting their costs onto the public healthcare system. I knew the system was bad. I did not think it was so bad that we would reach the point we did on 11 July when I received a phone call stating that triple 0 had been called—

Ms Bates interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): Member for Mudgeeraba, your interjections are not being taken.

Ms SCANLON:—to relocate over 70 elderly residents from Orchid House and Hibiscus House at Earle Haven over what we now understand appears to be a contract dispute over money. I drove to the facility that evening where I remained with the Minister for Health until the late hours of the night. What I witnessed was akin to what we would see during a disaster. I want to thank all of the emergency services, health staff and those aged-care staff who stayed behind to ensure that everyone had a safe place to stay.

I want to thank the over 500 people who signed my petition calling on the federal government to conduct an inquiry into this incident. While I am somewhat disappointed that this was not the independent inquiry we were hoping for, with Kate Carnell, the previous Liberal Party chief minister of the ACT appointed, I do hope that we get to the bottom of what happened in our community to ensure that something like this never happens again.

Ms Bates interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Mudgeeraba.

Ms SCANLON: What has come to light since this incident is that there were a number of red flags that raised some serious questions of the federal government which is responsible for the regulation of this sector. On 30 April 2007 Peoplecare, the approved provider, was sanctioned. They were again sanctioned on 3 June 2016 with a report identifying an immediate and severe risk to care recipients' safety and health and wellbeing. This detailed a failure to ensure appropriate clinical care that is consistent with general health, adequate nutrition and hydration and a failure to provide care recipients with a safe and comfortable environment. On 11 May 2017 again Peoplecare Pty Ltd were sanctioned and on 22 January this year they were issued with a noncompliance notice. We have also learnt that 22 complaints were made against the nursing home to the aged-care complaints commissioner since January this year.

We have to ask: at what stage do we say enough is enough? In a country like Australia it is inexcusable that we are hearing stories that aged-care staff are being asked to buy their own disposable gloves at a for-profit aged-care facility. I have heard from family members whose loved ones continue to suffer from UTIs because incontinence pads are being rationed; elderly people whose wounds are not healing because they have not been showered due to insufficient staffing levels; incorrect dosages of medication being given without appropriate training or supervision; and facilities receiving federal government funding requiring four elderly men to share a room with each other with no bathroom attached.

We are doing what we can at a state level by making a commitment to mandate minimum staffing levels in our 16 publicly owned facilities and providing an online tool for public disclosure of these staffing levels in private and public facilities on a quarterly basis. Not only is the Morrison government now refusing to follow our lead by implementing the same measures at a Commonwealth level; it is also actively trying to stop our government from implementing these sensible measures, stating that these changes could 'create a reporting burden on providers with no clear benefit to consumers', which is absolutely ridiculous. We report the ratio of teachers to students in classes, so why on earth can we not—

Mr Lister: No focus on outcomes. Stop pandering to the unions.

Ms SCANLON: I will take that interjection.

Ms Bates interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Mudgeeraba, you have been cautioned several times. You are now warned under the standing orders. Order, members. Member for Gaven, you have six seconds left on the clock.

Ms SCANLON: I will take the member's interjection and make no apology for standing up for aged-care workers, and I will continue to do so.