




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Hospitals

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (2.52 pm): Queenslanders deserve to have confidence that when they turn up to a public hospital in a medical emergency they will be seen on time. They deserve a world-class public health system that the Palaszczuk Labor government is not delivering. The latest scandal we have seen in health under Labor relates to the so-called rapid off-load ambulance transfer policy, or, as I have been told by the nurses at the coalface, OLI, which is the off-load immediately policy. As we saw at the Logan Hospital last month, it is straining relationships between nurses and paramedics and, according to the United Voice general secretary Gary Bullock, it is also putting patients' lives at risk. In fact, Labor's hand-picked director-general, Michael Walsh, had to front the media recently following a major blow-up at the Logan Hospital. In a media conference, he described the situation at Logan as clearly not a smooth process.

I am sure the health staff at Logan Hospital would say that is probably the understatement of the year. It was another situation where yet again the health minister was missing in action and hiding behind his bureaucrats. What we saw yesterday was another tale in the tragedy that is Labor's health crisis and yet again it was the minister failing to take any form of responsibility, with the CEO of the hospital and health service made the scapegoat. There was no accountability for the board and the chair of the board, Janine Walker, a former Labor candidate and well-known Labor luminary. There was no political accountability for the incompetent health minister, who yet again hides from scrutiny and does not front up for his own department. There was no leadership from the Premier, who promised better local health services at the last election but has spectacularly failed to deliver.

What Queenslanders need to know is that the minister was warned about issues and concerns with the new rapid off-load policy that was only supposed to be a temporary measure in place for the Commonwealth Games. A secret briefing note to the minister obtained by the LNP through RTI reveals that in June last year QEII emergency department nursing staff wrote to the minister regarding the placement of spare stretchers at the hospital emergency department with the following concerns raised: QEII nursing staff understood that the additional stretchers were to be utilised during the Commonwealth Games period only. However, they have remained in place; patients are being placed on these stretchers against doctors' clinical advice and left unattended which they believe to be a risk to patient safety; the nurses state they have not received any training in utilising the stretchers; and the QAS has gone against its own process with regard to coordination of patient off-loads within the ED.

The minister was warned there were concerns, yet the policy remained in place. According to Queensland Health Director-General Michael Walsh, the policy is operating at six hospital and health services across Queensland: Metro North, Metro South, Gold Coast, West Moreton, Townsville and Cairns. As a former ED nurse, I feel for the staff who are struggling under the weight of Labor's bad policies and the mismanagement that is notorious in Health. They are the front-line responders who do

an amazing job each and every day. The impact on patient care is obviously a major concern. It should always be the priority, but as we have seen time and time again it seems to rate as a lower priority under Labor. The Premier needs to start putting patient care first and end Labor's dump-and-run ambulance transfer policy. It was supposed to be a temporary policy in place for the Commonwealth Games but has remained in place since. The minister needs to focus on fixing the problem, not fudging the figures.

In recent weeks we have seen a code yellow crisis across South-East Queensland hospitals, emergency departments overcrowded, ambulance ramping skyrocketing, disputes between health staff about patient transfers and still issues around Labor's digital hospital IT rollout, the integrated electronic Medical Record. It is a system in crisis and it is time for something to be done about it. Scapegoating a CEO in one hospital and health service is a gutless act and will not fix systemic issues within the health system.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): Order! Member for Mudgeeraba, you have used unparliamentary language. I ask you to withdraw.

Ms BATES: I withdraw. The minister can blame the patients, blame the flu season, blame the feds, blame the LNP and anyone else to try to avoid taking responsibility for four years of failed Labor health policies, but Queenslanders are sick of the 'dog ate my homework' excuses from the minister. Queensland Health was a basket case under former premier Anna Bligh and now it is bedlam under the current Labor Premier, Annastacia Palaszczuk. Queenslanders deserve much better and it is about time patient care was a Labor priority.