




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

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PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Hospitals, Staff Safety

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (2.33 pm): In March we learnt of another shocking incident of violence against Queensland hospital staff. A wardsman and a security guard were stabbed in a frantic attack at Logan Hospital. Sadly, attacks like this are the norm for our hardworking hospital staff who are being used as punching bags inside our hospitals. Since July last year there have been over 3,600 assaults on hospital staff reported. From 2015-16 to 2017-18, assaults and serious assaults increased by over 48 per cent. This is an indictment on the ability of this government to protect health workers across this state. In any other profession this would be condemned. Meanwhile, hospital staff are punched, kicked, bitten, spat on, choked and even stabbed.

For many health workers this kind of abuse has become normalised and even expected. As a former ED nurse and someone with loved ones still in that field, it is just simply unacceptable. Our hospital staff deserve better than this. They should not be going to work scared of physical violence or being attacked. At Logan Hospital there has been a 19 per cent increase in assaults under this do-nothing Labor government. In Metro North and Metro South there are at least 32 acts of aggression recorded every week of the year. How can we forget the image released by Metro North Hospital and Health Service which revealed dozens of weapons seized by staff including knives, scissors and a screwdriver? What is the government going to do to stop this and what is being done to protect staff? When was the last time the Minister for Health visited a busy emergency department on a Saturday night and witnessed the chaos firsthand?

No level of violence is acceptable in our hospitals and health services. I have been calling for a permanent police beat to be installed at some of our worst hospitals for assault including Logan and the Gold Coast University Hospital—two of the worst hospitals in Queensland for assaults on staff. A permanent police presence would deter attacks, make it easier for staff to report assaults and see that perpetrators are charged before being discharged from hospital. Our current Minister for Health snubs his nose at this suggested solution and does not seem to think that 3,600 assaults in less than eight months is a big deal. The Minister for Health's ignorance on this issue is jaw dropping, especially in the face of the attack at Logan Hospital. He was nowhere to be seen on this issue. If a police beat were in place at Logan on the weekends, it is unlikely that the attack which took place would have occurred.

Hospital staff deserve action. This is a problem now and it needs to be solved now. Our hospital staff deserve a safe working environment. The minister needs to stop playing politics with our health system and prioritise protecting our health workers over wasting taxpayers' money renaming hospitals. Nurses and doctors go to work to save lives and help people recover and heal every day. They do not deserve to be treated like punching bags.