




Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles
MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Private Health Insurance; Health System

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (9.49 am): Yesterday, 1 April, private health insurance premiums increased again. That is the sixth year in a row since the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison LNP government was elected that premiums have increased. They are increasing far ahead of inflation and even further ahead of wage growth. Under the LNP, private health insurance premiums have increased far greater than everyday families can afford to pay. In fact, under the LNP the average cost of private health insurance for a family has increased 30 per cent—nearly a third. For most families that is an extra \$1,100 a year. As a result, tens of thousands of Queenslanders have been left with no choice but to abandon their private health insurance.

Under the LNP, hospital cover in Queensland has fallen by nearly 10 per cent. When they were elected, more than 45 per cent of Queenslanders had hospital cover. That is now around 41.5 per cent. In fact, 23,000 fewer Queenslanders have insurance now than when Tony Abbott took over, even though our population has increased. Fewer Queenslanders with hospital insurance cover means more people using our fantastic public hospitals. In fact, activity in our public hospitals has increased at twice the rate per year as it has in the private system. The growth in public hospital patients between 2013-14 and 2017-18 was more than 250 per cent greater than the growth in private hospital patients.

Right across Queensland, private hospitals have been forced to scale back services and in some cases close altogether—like in Gladstone, where the Mater have announced they will close their hospital there. Federal Labor has announced a rescue package to make sure Gladstone does not lose that facility. So far Scott Morrison has refused to match it. Federal Labor has also committed to cap increases in private health insurance premiums going forward, putting an end to the LNP's year-on-year price hikes that have led Queenslanders to desert private health insurance.

When it comes to health care, Greg Hunt and the LNP have failed on every front—failed on private health insurance premiums and coverage, failed on hospital funding, failed on Medicare. Tonight they have one last chance to reverse their failed policies or Australians will elect a Labor government that will.

Last week in this House a number of members referenced individual patient experiences. Out of respect for patient privacy and confidentiality, I am unable to address the individual claims made. However, I can assure the House that the matters raised have been referred to the relevant HHS, investigated and addressed where appropriate. A member also inquired what action I had taken to address matters raised by the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine. I would like to thank the president of ACEM for agreeing to travel from Sydney to meet with me on Thursday along with Queensland representatives.