




Speech By
Ros Bates

MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

Record of Proceedings, 16 June 2020

MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Coronavirus, Health Response

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (2.45 pm): They say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Yet again the LNP is setting the policy agenda in this state from opposition. On this side of the House we have a team with a plan to build a stronger economy and get Queensland working again. On that side we have a Palaszczuk Labor government that has cancelled the budget in a sign they have no economic plan and hides their economic mismanagement from Queenslanders before the next state election.

The Palaszczuk Labor government's about-face on elective surgery waitlists in Queensland shows once again that the Deputy Premier is more interested in politics than the care of Queensland patients. We saw it when they wasted taxpayers' money renaming the Lady Cilento Children's Hospital rather than focusing on the clinical care of our sickest kids, and we have seen it again with the announcement on the weekend. The Leader of the Opposition put forward our plan to partner with the private sector to reduce waitlists and ensure sick and injured Queenslanders get the clinical care they need in a timely fashion. We have long said there is no point having empty private hospital beds at a time when there are patients sitting on the public waitlist.

It might the business model of Queensland Health to attract private patients in public hospitals to use their private health insurance to prop up their budget bottom line, pushing more public patients onto long waitlists, but it is the LNP's plan to prioritise patient care regardless of the level of health cover of the patient. This was the policy the LNP announced over two years ago and the Deputy Premier has spent the last two years bagging. On 14 June 2018 the Deputy Premier said in the House—

Their plan to fix our public hospitals is to take money off the public hospitals and outsource and privatise our hospital services. I wondered why they would do that, because there are so few private hospitals in the places they plan to represent. Is it because the member for Nanango needs all of those Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast votes where they do have access to a private hospital.

...

Those opposite want to take it from our doctors and nurses and give it to their mates in private hospitals. It is a shameful disappointment for regional and rural Queensland.

On 31 July 2018 the Deputy Premier told estimates—

I know the member will not like me pointing out that their health policy is about propping up the bottom lines of their big private hospital donors—

Yet here we are over two years later, and a desperate Palaszczuk Labor government has finally acknowledged there is a problem with surgery waitlists and that the best plan to fix that is the LNP's plan. Given that the Palaszczuk government has decided to copy our plan, albeit two years later and in a half-baked fashion, the Deputy Premier might like to stop hiding the Queensland Health hospital performance data. It was revealed in a recent Economic and Governance Committee hearing by the

director-general of Queensland Health that the department was still collecting the data; they just are not publishing it. I understand there was never a ministerial decision by national cabinet or the health ministers in relation to not publishing the data and it was only ever agreed to by state senior Health bureaucrats around the country.

Well, the curve has flattened. Thanks to the efforts of Queenslanders we only have a handful of active cases in the state. Queenslanders deserve access to the care they need. They deserve to know how our hospitals are performing. Only this morning the Queensland Health website still had the following disclaimer—

The COVID-19 pandemic presents an unprecedented challenge to health systems around the world. As part of our response to increase capacity and manage the impact, there has been national agreement to suspend public reporting of hospital performance until further notice. This aligns to the requirement to postpone elements of routine and planned elective surgeries and outpatient activity across Australia. We want to reassure you that we have one of the best health systems in the world and are well prepared to tackle novel coronavirus.

The national cabinet agreed to have elective surgeries restart at the end of April. I call on the health minister to start being transparent and accountable and stop hiding his bad health data. While the LNP has a plan for more support for our hardworking frontline nurses, doctors, midwives and paramedics that provides better patient care and reduces hospital waiting lists, Labor continues to put politics ahead of patient care. Only the LNP has a plan to provide a world-class health system for Queenslanders no matter where they live.