



Speech By  
**Ros Bates**


**MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA**

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Record of Proceedings, 13 August 2020

## **PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT**

### **Metro North Hospital and Health Service**

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (2.12 pm): Now more than ever, Queenslanders deserve to have confidence in our public health system. While our hardworking nurses, doctors, paramedics, midwives and health professionals do an incredible job supporting patients across the state, the culture of cover-up reigns supreme at senior levels of the department and across some hospital and health services.

We have seen dodgy polls used to waste taxpayers' money to rename hospitals, we have seen corruption investigations and resignations from senior bureaucrats and we have even seen the minister attack journalists for exposing his own failures and mistruths. In recent weeks, media reports about the conduct of bullying by the communication director of Metro North Hospital and Health Service—a senior executive of Queensland's biggest health service—have surfaced. These relate to several complaints from several staff within the communications team of that HHS.

As the *Courier-Mail* reported, the director is under investigation after allegations of bullying and harassment, including offensive nicknames and references to other work colleagues. A brave group of 10 women have blown the whistle after initial attempts to raise claims about the toxic culture went unchecked. I also understand the senior director of Queensland Health's strategic communications unit was advised about the issues and concerns of several women in the communications team last year. Women were preyed on, bullied, harassed, intimidated—some suffering nervous breakdowns and worse. The stories of these women go to the culture of cover-up in the biggest health service in Queensland.

This was a team of people in regular contact with the minister's office. If the minister did not know anything, he should have. He needs to come clean about why this happened for so long seemingly unchecked. Despite issues of grave concern, I understand that this person has only recently been suspended.

People have been afraid to speak out for fear of repercussions. The recruitment processes within these organisations with staff on short-term contracts mean that people have to side with job security, particularly when their allegations are about their boss. Several brave staff have come forward and provided inside details of his mode of operation which prompted the media stories and the subsequent investigation—but he is still employed.

They describe a boss who would be 'erratic', 'threatening', 'controlling', 'aggressive' and 'inappropriate'. Some of these allegations include playing constant games of punishment and reward within the office; regular leaking of information, including confidential things about other HHSs in particular to curry favour with media; obsessing over young, pretty journalists and having silly nicknames for them, always making sure he was involved with those stories and those female journos; making sexually inappropriate comments about random people; and referring to the downstairs cafeteria as the 'rape dungeon'.

The concern is that this went on for months and months and was basically left unchecked. The minister needs to come out, apologise to these women and tell the people of Queensland why his biggest hospital and health service is in the media for all the wrong reasons yet again. Anything less than that is yet another cover-up and major health failure on this minister's watch.

*(Time expired)*