



Speech By  
**Ali King**


**MEMBER FOR PUMICESTONE**

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Record of Proceedings, 31 August 2021

## **MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

### **Pumicestone Electorate, General Practitioners**

 **Ms KING** (Pumicestone—ALP) (2.49 pm): This afternoon in the chamber there has been a lot of talk about leadership. Here is a chance for the LNP and the federal government to show some desperately needed leadership on health. Back in March I told this House about the dire shortage of GPs gripping our community in Pumicestone. Over the last six months the situation has only become worse. Since I first spoke out, local medical practices have contacted me about their struggles to recruit GPs. Recently, the popular medical centre at Pumicestone Village shut its doors. After two long years of trying they could not recruit permanent doctors to replace locums who had moved on. That added 1,000 patients to the list of local people who do not have a trusted GP to turn to; local people who are still waiting for up to four weeks for a GP appointment or who cannot get on the books of a GP at all.

Pumicestone people who are trying to get vaccinated cannot get a GP appointment. People due for routine screening cannot get a GP appointment. People who need help to manage their chronic health conditions cannot get a GP appointment. No wonder our hospital emergency departments are under pressure. No wonder patients are presenting later and sicker when they get ill. No wonder people's mental health is impacted when they do not have a trusted GP to turn to.

Our GP crisis is a problem the federal government should have fixed by now. It is a problem that federal health minister Greg Hunt could fix with the stroke of a pen if he made our community a priority. As I said back in March, it has not always been this way. Until 2019 Pumicestone had District of Workforce Shortage status which made it much easier for local GP clinics to find and retain local doctors. Then, with no notice to doctors or the community, the federal government changed the system and took Pumicestone off the GP priority list. Waiting times blew out. When doctors moved on, clinics could not replace them. This was the very first issue that was raised with me after I was elected and, while it is not a state government problem to fix, I could not turn my back on people in our community who deserve to be able to see a GP when they desperately need one.

Back in June I wrote to the federal health minister and asked him to take urgent action on behalf of the people in Pumicestone to fix our GP crisis by putting our community back on the GP priority list. For the last 86 days I have heard nothing. It is a slap in the face to the more than 1,100 people who have signed my petition asking Greg Hunt to act. This week I have written to our federal member for Longman to ask him to give Greg Hunt the hurry-up to fix our GP crisis. He has hung back for the last three years and watched the problem get worse, but with a federal election due soon I am hoping that the federal member for Longman might finally get a move on. Or, like the vaccine 'stroll-out', has Scott Morrison's government decided that fixing our GP crisis is not a race.

State and federal Labor takes our GP crisis seriously. When federal Labor leader Anthony Albanese came to Bribie Island recently he met with Dr Steve Kearney from Ningi Doctors. Dr Kearney told him that we need urgent action to restore Pumicestone's GP priority status. Our Labor candidate for Longman, Rebecca Fanning, promised that she would fight for GP services every step of the way.

The contrast with the Morrison government's inaction could not be starker. Our Palaszczuk government is working hard every single day so the people in Pumicestone can have the very best health care. We are investing in more doctors and nurses to replace those cut under the Newman government. We are doubling the size of Caboolture Hospital. We are building not one but two satellite hospitals so that Pumicestone residents can have more health care closer to home. Now we need Scott Morrison's government to finally step up and protect people's health in Pumicestone by fixing our GP crisis. I ask those opposite to pick up the phone and talk to their federal colleagues and get this done for the people of Pumicestone.