




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR BANCROFT

Record of Proceedings, 16 June 2021

MOTION

Health System

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (5.15 pm): I rise to speak in support of the amendment to the motion. It is interesting that the member for Oodgeroo talked about losing control because one thing they will never be in control of is this side of the House because of their record on what they do in health. The Queensland public will never accept them back on the government benches if they continue to run on their record of how they manage health.

One of the other things that the member for Oodgeroo talked about—and this is what we will see here: we will see a constant criticism of Queensland Health staff. It will be shielded or perhaps put in different words, but at the end of the day the side over there are criticising the hardworking doctors, ambos, nurses and health professionals who are working in Queensland Health.

Dr ROBINSON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take offence at those comments. I made no such comments that were derogatory about staff and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): I will take some advice. We have not heard the member referring to the member personally. We will review the transcript later but for now we will ask the member to withdraw.

Mr WHITING: I withdraw. What a contrast we have: the LNP which put up this motion compared to what we are doing in this budget to make sure the lives of Queenslanders are protected.

Ms Lauga: A record budget.

Mr WHITING: It absolutely is a record budget. I will take that interjection from the member for Keppel. It is \$22.2 billion, which is up 13 per cent in two years and over 53 per cent higher than under the final allocation of the Newman government. It includes a new investment of \$482 million to support the delivery of health care, especially to focus on that increasing pressure we are seeing on emergency departments and in elective surgery. We are starting on our satellite hospitals at Caboolture, Pine Rivers, Bribie Island, Redlands, Brisbane South, Ripley and Tugun. These are things that the LNP would never, ever do. They had their chance and they would never, ever do it.

Let us look at the Caboolture Hospital. We were there the other day. It is a \$400 million build, with this new massive clinical services building coming out of the ground, effectively doubling the size of the hospital. The other side could not even aspire to something like that. It is a contrast. What is the LNP policy? What policy are they peddling tonight? There is none. Instead of coming up with an alternative, they are just focusing on peddling misery, and that is an insult to the people of Queensland.

I take issue with one of the themes that the LNP are delivering here—and this is something that the minister spoke about—and that is their argument that we should be doing better because our system has only had minimal impact from COVID-19 because of the few people with COVID-19 here. We heard the member for Gregory say, 'Stop blaming that. What pandemic? Never happened!' That kind of argument from them is wrong; it is misguided.

We know that our whole health system has geared up to prevent COVID-19 working its way through Queensland. Firstly, if we look at our health system, we see it has moved into a massive preventive and testing effort. That is even before we get to the inoculation phase. Honourable members should think of how many people were allocated to staff the vaccination clinic at Caloundra in recent times. They pulled in people from everywhere. Was it dozens? Was it hundreds? Who knows? It was a massive effort to get that doing. Yet what did we hear the member for Kawana say? 'Hang on, don't close the music venue down the road. We have to keep it open,' and, 'Oh look out, the Queensland state government is going to lock us all down.' That is not the approach we need to keep Queensland safe. It is probably the opposite approach.

I think this line of argument from the opposition shows their ignorance about the management of the health system and it shows why they cannot be trusted to manage a health system anywhere in Australia. I ask them how could they not think our whole health system has changed in a COVID-19 world? All they can do is chase headlines and chase ambulances. We know that our public healthcare system is carrying a heavy load. One of the reasons for that is that people cannot get in to see a bulk-billing doctor because the federal government has not increased the bulk-billing rates.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order, members.

Mr WHITING: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am being assailed by minnows over here. I will not need any protection—maybe a mosquito net for their faint barbs. That would probably be about it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Back to the motion please, member.

Mr WHITING: They have frozen the amount of the Medicare rebate. It is hard to get in to see a doctor when people want to be bulk-billed. I could go on and on, but we would not trust them going anywhere near a health system.