




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR BANCROFT

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Health System; National Asbestos Awareness Week; Movember; Comments by Member for Bancroft, Withdrawal and Apology

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (2.52 pm): I stand today to talk about how the Palaszczuk government is transforming our health system in Queensland. We are rebuilding hospitals, we are building new ones, we are building a strong system by employing more Queenslanders to deliver health services and we are building new and better ways to meet the needs of a growing Queensland population.

An important anchor for building and rebuilding a better health system is the infrastructure. The Palaszczuk government continues that fine Labor tradition of transformative investment in the physical part of our system. We are delivering around \$1 billion annual program of works made up of new and sustaining built infrastructure, technology, equipment renewal, programs and projects. That includes over 500 projects and programs underway across the state at any time.

There is another building initiative that shows our dedication to a better health system. The 2021 budget established a \$2 billion Hospital Building Fund to ease growth pressures across the health system. I am especially proud of the seven satellite hospitals that we will build. These are masterful and wonderful innovations. They include ones at Pine Rivers, Caboolture and Bribie Island in my area. They will increase the capacity in our health and take pressure off other parts of our health system.

Other examples of innovative building projects that will help deliver a modern service include the Gold Coast mental health project of \$105 million, an energy efficiency program worth \$30 million, and a rebuild of the Caboolture emergency department—love that one—will double its capacity. We are not just building new infrastructure and building new programs for a modern Queensland health system; we are investing in the Queenslanders who will deliver the health care and health services needed by Queenslanders. Queensland Health staffing is projected to increase by over 2,300 between June 2021 and 30 June 2022. The LNP may whinge and whine continuously about how the health system is going, but they can never match our record in building and rebuilding our health system.

There are two other health related issues I would like to speak about. National Asbestos Awareness Week is 22 to 28 November. I want to commend the work of the Asbestos Disease Support Society. Asbestos related diseases are not a thing of the past. This year the society supported 65 people who passed away from asbestos related diseases. It is estimated that some 4,000 Australians die each year from exposure to asbestos, and that is double the annual national road toll. These people did nothing more than turn up to work to make a living or simply wash the clothes of a family member who worked with asbestos. The message from me and the asbestos society is that Queenslanders need to take so much more care around asbestos. It is in all homes built before 1990; it is in one in three Queensland homes. There is no safe level of exposure to asbestos fibres and they are 200 times smaller than a human hair. This week the lights at Parliament House will be lit in the colours of the society—blue and white—in recognition of asbestos week. Ribbons will also be distributed for members to wear on Thursday.

I am also asking everyone here to support my fundraising effort for Movember. Movember is the leading charity in the areas of men's health and I am focusing on mental health and suicide prevention. I am fundraising as a tribute to my late mate Finn Dahlerup Scott. We worked together for many years and cycled together for many years. He worked in Mates in Construction and he had special expertise in talking to men about suicide prevention. I have a link on my Facebook page, so please make a difference and make a contribution—or the moustache stays!

During my contribution to the private member's motion on Wednesday, 13 October 2021 I made a statement asserting that several members of this House did not accept the science of COVID vaccinations and were not pushing for vaccinations. I am now aware that the said members have posted on social media and communicated in other forums their support for COVID-19 vaccinations. Accordingly, I wish to correct the record and withdraw my statement of 13 October. I also wish to apologise unreservedly to the House and specifically to each of the members whom I identified in my contribution: the members for Surfers Paradise, Burleigh, Currumbin, Mermaid Beach, Southport, Kawana, Maroochydore, Glass House and Mudgeeraba.