




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BROADWATER

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MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Health System

 **Mr CRISAFULLI** (Broadwater—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.00 pm): Make no mistake: the state government is losing control of the health system in Queensland. Everyday Queenslanders are now starting to get in their vernacular a term that makes me shudder, and that is that we are going back to the bad old days of Queensland Health. They are not my words; they are the words of Queenslanders who have contacted the opposition at their wit's end about what they are experiencing, what they are living through, what they are seeing through the eyes of their families—that is, that we are going back to the bad old days of Queensland Health. The public health system provides the interface when people are at the most cherished moments in their lives. It can be the best day bringing a loved one into the world and, sadly, it can be the worst of days, but a good health system is a fundamental right for every single Queenslander. We owe it to Queenslanders to debate this matter and we owe it to Queenslanders to raise the issues that they are talking about at the kitchen table.

Today when the member for Mudgeeraba sought to raise valid concerns with the health minister she was mocked and derided for doing so. The questions that were being asked were questions that had come from everyday Queenslanders, and I say this to the health minister: perhaps a working nurse of many decades might be someone who is worth listening to, particularly when that nurse of many decades is getting information from colleagues who are experiencing a system that the government is losing control of every single day. Here are some figures to ram it home. In February of this year, 40 per cent of ambulances were ramped at our hospitals across the state. At the RBWH, at Logan and in Redlands, it was more than 50 per cent. More than one in two ambulances that arrive at those hospitals wait longer than the prescribed time, yet the government says there is no problem.

Six years ago in February 2015 that number was 15 per cent. That is an increase of 25 per cent. Perhaps most concerning is that in 2011 when the then premier described the system as broken—a basket case and the only way it could be fixed was by pulling it apart and making it into two—that figure was 30 per cent. It was a basket case in 2011 at 30 per cent, yet today those opposite will come in here and say to us that the system is only in crisis because people dare turn up to seek a service. Through the voice of a Queenslander who otherwise would not get the opportunity to say it, I say to Tricia in Rockhampton thank you for reaching out. She said—

My mother was ramped at the Rockhampton base hospital and was 3rd in-line out of 18 ambulance trolleys. She waited on an ambulance trolley from 1.30 pm until 10.15 pm that night. I feel genuinely sorry for the ambulance teams if an emergency happens while their trolleys are ramped ...

Les at Flagstone said—

I was taken to the QE2 Hospital suffering from complications associated with my Prostate Cancer. On arrival I was delivered to the Ambulance Ramping Area and waited a further 2 hours to see a Doctor and get some pain relief and at this stage the Ambulance crew had to wait the whole time until I was handed over to a Doctor, it seemed like a terrible waste of time for the Ambulance and the Paramedics sitting around waiting when they could have been attending other emergencies. Something needs to change in our system ...

You betcha, Les, it does, and that was exactly the question that the member for Mudgeeraba was asking today. The questions have come from paramedics, they have come from nurses, they have come from doctors and they have come from Queenslanders. They want action because, if it was broken in 2011 at 30 per cent, it is sure broken now at 40 per cent. What about the case raised by the member for Warrego of a 93-year-old woman waiting four hours in pain when she was a stone's throw away from a hospital?

With regard to emergency department performance in the December quarter, 23 per cent of patients who attended a Queensland Health emergency department were not seen in the clinically recommended time frame. With regard to our elective surgery waiting lists, in January 2015 there were 30,000 Queenslanders waiting for elective surgery and in December 2020 that number was 55,000 Queenslanders. That is nearly 25,000 more. What does it mean to Robert from Gaven? He said—

I was told I needed a full shoulder reconstruction. I was put on a cat 2 waiting list and was informed it would be 1 and a half years just to see the doctor. I nearly fainted hearing that. About 3 weeks into the wait I was asked by the hospital if I still wanted to have the operation. I would be 79 by the time I saw the doctor.

He would be 79 by the time he would get to see the doctor! He continued—

So I said forget it ... no thanks. I will live with it. The hospital waiting list is a disgrace.

That quote was Robert's, not mine.

Earlier today the member for Mudgeeraba raised concerns that category 3 patients who had had their current waiting period wiped to see a specialist were told to start again. There was an individual case articulated by the member for Mudgeeraba when she spoke about the system as a whole, but there was one individual case where somebody waited 600 days only to be told that they are not really on that waiting list. This is not for surgery; this is to see the specialist for the first time. It is a waiting list for a waiting list. We are seeing it in our regions. We are seeing poor management in our regions such as in the member for Nanango's electorate with the cost blowout of the Kingaroy Hospital. That is money that could be spent on other facilities in the bush to help people get quality care. We see it in Bundaberg where a promise that was made is now being walked back as to what a new hospital might look like, and I can assure those opposite that we will be watching commitments in Toowoomba. We know that people—

A government member: Get your facts right!

Mr CRISAFULLI: We look forward to holding the member to account. We look forward to seeing what is delivered. We know what the commitment was and we intend to ensure that the government honours that commitment. We know that people are treated in bathrooms under a shower. We know that lifesaving surgery at places like the RBWH has been cancelled, with people forced to travel to Sydney and Melbourne. We know there are sterile storage rooms in our hospitals which are not actually sterile. We know that the government is losing control of the health system.

Today I have quoted numbers and during question time tomorrow we will be raising a few more numbers, so perhaps the minister and the Premier may not be as shocked tomorrow when we ask questions about health as they were today. It was not an A-grade performance. We will be asking questions tomorrow and we will be using figures to highlight our concerns, but figures run a distant second when you have to take phone calls from people who have had loved ones die in their arms. In the last month I have spoken to people—

Government members interjected.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I would urge those opposite to listen because these are stories from their electorates. There will be stories of constituents those opposite represent who have had loved ones die in their arms waiting for an ambulance to arrive. There are stories across this state of people who have given up waiting, and there are stories of people in this state who are living every day with a government that is losing control of the health system. Above all, Queenslanders are not mugs. When they start telling you that it is going back to the bad old days of Queensland Health, you know we have a problem that must urgently be addressed.