




Speech By
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Record of Proceedings, 14 September 2021

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Health System, Data

 **Mr CRISAFULLI** (Broadwater—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.00 pm): The Queensland health crisis has been laid bare by the Auditor-General's report. This is a damning report, a scathing report which lays the Queensland health crisis firmly at the feet of this government. Over three terms this is the government's health legacy, and it has cost Queenslanders greatly. Some have paid with their lives. What did the report say about emergency departments? It said—

... as a percentage of the entire patient population, their performance has been declining.

From July 2020 to February 2021, only one of the top 26 reporting hospitals met the targets for both ramping and time spent in emergency departments. What did it say about treating patients within clinically recommended times? It said that hospitals have not met targets for category 2 or 3. In terms of getting patients off stretchers within clinically recommended times—what people in the real world call ambulance ramping—it said—

This target has not been met at the statewide level in the past seven years.

The wait time between ambulance arrival and triage is not monitored. The performance of short-term treatment areas is not monitored or measured. The Queensland Ambulance Service only provides summary reports to key teams 'whoever they are'. The people who need to know, do not know. Queensland Health is flying blind and our population is worse off for it.

It was a digital project that the government started to try to fix the problem, but 'the project was put on hold as part of the Queensland government's debt saving plan'. This government is more interested in looking good than performing well. I have said it before and I will say it again: it is not about how things look; it is the way things are. Right now, the way things are in the Queensland health system is scary.

The clincher is that the report found that data is being cleansed. The true state of our hospital is being hidden. What does that mean? The report states—

As a result, the performance reported to the Commonwealth and the community may not be accurate, funding for EDs may be at incorrect levels, and demographic data used for planning may not accurately reflect each hospital's current needs.

Do members want to know what that means? That means a failure to plan will cost people their lives. Page after page this is scary for anyone who needs help in their hour of need. Page after page this report is a horror story. I have read some reports from the Auditor-General, but few have belled the cat as loudly as this one. This government can blame all sorts of things—COVID, the Commonwealth, clinicians—but, in the end, the report shows a culture of failure and what happens when we do not plan ahead.

What does it mean for everyday Queenslanders? It means when someone's child has an asthma attack the Queensland government's health service may not be there for them. It means when someone's dad has a heart attack the Queensland government's health service may not be there for

them. It means when someone's grandmother has a fall the Queensland government's health service may not be there for them. These are consequences for actions when a government starts losing control of service delivery, when it puts image ahead of outcome. These are the consequences for everyday Queenslanders. This report puts in black and white what many Queenslanders know: they are suffering under a sick system.

Our town halls have heard right across the board stories from real Queenslanders who just wanted help when they needed it most. Catherine from Cleveland told the shadow health minister her dad was terminally ill with leukaemia when he needed to have his cannula replaced. They waited 12 hours for treatment and left the hospital without receiving any. Anthony from Ipswich: his dad was taken to the Ipswich Hospital after suffering several heart attacks. Neville spent more than 24 hours in ED before he was moved into a coronary ward. He passed away in hospital five days later. Then there was Steve, whose wife died in his arms waiting for an ambulance to arrive.

I have said it time and time again: when we raise these issues we are not criticising the frontline staff. The frontline staff are coming to us asking us to raise these issues. They feel helpless, powerless and voiceless. They want a system to support them. They did not sign up to be a paramedic to sit at the end of a ramp, knowing that at the end of a phone line there is somebody in their darkest hour waiting for help. They signed up because they are great Queenslanders looking to serve. People do not become doctors and nurses because they want to be part of some sort of system that lets patients down. They are great Queenslanders. They want service. They want to know that they are being supported.

What are the solutions and recommendations? They are to: improve how we record information on things like ambulance ramping—be open and transparent; introduce real-time hospital data to drive cultural performance—make sure that in real time people know what is happening; and improve triaging. The shadow health minister is going to explain—and I would urge those opposite to listen—what could happen if they empower people at the front line to make decisions. Let us put more money into those health and hospital services. Let us make sure that the people at the front line are making decisions. Let clinical nurses be in charge of triaging. Another solution or recommendation is to empower the HHSs.

We saw a disgraceful scene here a few months ago where the government was talking about how they were going to increase funding to the health service but with the other hand they were taking it away from the front line—from the HHSs; the people who make the decisions. That is where more money needs to go.

These solutions are solutions the LNP has put forward. They have not come from us. They are solutions given to us by the nurses, by the doctors, by the patients, by the ambos and by whistleblowers. We heard story after story from whistleblowers in Caboolture. I would urge those opposite to listen to the shadow minister about that. I say to the government: swallow your pride for the sake of Queenslanders and for the sake of fixing a sick system. Be honest, be open, be transparent and share the data in real time.

If members want an example of transparency, this report was tabled minutes after the Premier faced a media conference. Every time we have one of these tabled, it is a Friday afternoon or it is moments after the Premier stands up and faces a media conference. Here is an idea: front up and own the issue. If you own the issue and if you are prepared to stand up and be accountable, that will drive cultural reform. If you are prepared to front up—

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): Pause the clock. Member for Nanango, member for Hervey Bay and member for Bundaberg, I will ask that you quit quarrelling across the chamber.

Mr CRISAFULLI: It is one thing to be angry; it is another thing to drive change. It is another thing to show leadership. It is another thing to be prepared to make decisions and admit when you get it wrong and change your policy position accordingly. No Queensland can say that the Queensland health system is world class at present. It is not the fault of the doctors, it is not the fault of the nurses, it is not the fault of the ambos; it is the fault of a government that is losing control.

In the same way that the government lost control towards the end of its tenure in 2011, when it was a 'basket case', history is repeating itself. What I am finding increasingly is that the numbers that at the time were driving the then premier to describe Queensland Health as a 'basket case' are back—

Ms Bates: They're worse.

Mr CRISAFULLI: They are worse, and that is a concern for every Queenslander. Today, we must grab this report and we must be prepared to learn from it. We must be prepared to empower frontline staff, release data in real time and make sure that things like ambulance ramping are listed and reported on. Everyone everywhere in this state deserves a world-class health system, not a government that hides and dodges when critical services break down for Queenslanders.