




Speech By
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Record of Proceedings, 12 October 2021

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Health System

 **Mr CRISAFULLI** (Broadwater—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.00 pm): Members in this House have heard me talk about the Queensland Health crisis. Well, now they know why—another inquiry into another hospital, a system that is in crisis. This time it is the Mackay Base Hospital and an independent review into the obstetrics ward. This is deeply concerning. Imagine being a young mum waiting for surgery or imagine being a young mum who has been through surgery. Imagine the questions that those young mums are asking themselves as of today—questions they are asking because of a government that cannot manage the health system in this state.

What is most significant is on the floor of the parliament today, upon being questioned by the member for Whitsunday, the health minister said that she had been informed of this development in the last 24 hours. I am going to guess it might be even a little sooner than within the last 24 hours. I am going to hazard a guess that the health minister found out about it via the media. If ever we need proof of a minister out of her depth and of a government losing control of a system, there it is right here today on the floor of this parliament, and this follows an inquiry into the Caboolture Hospital. I can tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker Kelly, the situation at Caboolture is real and I have seen it in the eyes of victims: people like Olivia, who has had her life turned upside down; a young man by the name of Jodie, who went in for routine minor surgery and has had complications beyond belief; and then on Sunday I met a woman in her 40s by the name of Janelle, who reached out, did what was asked and did not receive a call back about a system that has badly let her down.

As I have said many times before, this inquiry is too brief, it is too narrow and it is too closely connected to Queensland Health. It is the kind of inquiry that you have when you are not really looking for the truth. It is one of those inquiries. I welcome the two-week extension, but that only takes it from four to six weeks. When the minister first stood up when forced under pressure to have a hotline for people to report, the minister crowed that there were only several people who had contacted the hotline. As of this morning, there were nearly 100, and I would argue—if the government is serious and it would allow the time and if it would spend some of the dollars we see spent on self-promotion promoting to the people of Caboolture that they could come forward—there are many more. There are stories that need to be told, but what we have here is deeply concerning: two hospitals, two separate inquiries, too many reasons not to be deeply concerned about the Queensland Health crisis. We owe it to all of those victims to get to the bottom of a system that is in crisis.

This government hates scrutiny. Every time we seek to question the minister about her poor performance and about the government's lack of attention to detail, we immediately get the response, 'Stop talking down our hardworking health professionals.' Do those opposite want to know where the information is coming from? The hardworking health professionals—the doctors, the nurses, the paramedics. They are crying out for help. They are working to try and repair a broken system, and we have heard that consistently. When the shadow health minister and I have gone across the state, this

is what we have been told at health crisis town halls in Cairns, Rockhampton, Hervey Bay, Sunshine Coast, Redcliffe, Brisbane, Gold Coast. At all of them people stood up and the first thing they said is, 'I want to commend the staff and how much they try,' and in every one of those audiences was a current and former employee of Queensland Health reaching out to try and fix a broken system, and that is what it is.

Today we heard that the government will continue to try and find reasons to blame others for the state of Queensland Health, but it has had seven years—seven years—to get this system ready. What else did we hear? We heard that ramping at the time of the election of this government was at 15 per cent and then went to 29 per cent before coronavirus and it is now at 41 per cent. At some hospitals it is over 60 per cent. In the Redlands it is nearly two in every three. With regard to code yellows, there were 91 in the first year of this government, 287 in the year before coronavirus and in September there was one code yellow per day. The surgical waitlist was 30,000—

Mr Brown interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order! Pause the clock. Member for Capalaba, you are warned.

Mr CRISAFULLI: The surgical waiting list was 30,000 at the time of this government's election and then it was 56,000 before COVID, and now it has nearly doubled from where we started. People are looking for a pathway out of the pandemic. They want the government to choose hope over fear. They want confidence over chaos. We have put forward our solutions, and they are solutions that have been garnered from those meetings attended by doctors and nurses reaching out—solutions like better triaging, better resourcing of beds, empowering the people at the front line to again make the decisions. They are the people who are crying out. Above all, they want to be able to share data in real time. You cannot improve what you do not measure and this government has a culture that it would rather things look good than be good. In other places you can look in real time and see the data which can drive the cultural change. That is what Queenslanders are yearning for. They want to know that a system will be there for them. They want to know that Queensland Health can be there in their hour of need. They want to know that the government has the solutions. Let us give Queenslanders a plan. Let us give them a target. Let us find a way to reunite families and help struggling small businesses. Let us choose hope over fear, because that is what they are looking for.

Today in question after question we heard members of the government look to blame everyone else but themselves. They are prepared to blame a government that will be 10 years in the wilderness at the time of the next election for why people cannot get surgery on time now. They will be prepared to blame a government domiciled in Canberra for the fact that they cannot allow frontline staff to be able to administer people in their hour of need because they are not properly resourcing it. They will blame COVID, they will blame the elderly, they will blame the private sector. They blame everyone involved in the health space aside from themselves. I say to the government: right now Queenslanders are desperate to know that this government is taking this seriously and that the government believes in the ability to find a way out of this pandemic, because every single day Queenslanders turn on the television and they see a government that is peddling fear. There are people who are stuck—Queenslanders who want to come home—and all they get is a government that wants to choose fear. When it comes to hospitals, they get a government that would rather play politics.

Every day they yearn for a government that will give them a pathway out of this pandemic. An operator in Cairns, who has been in the charter boat industry for 30 years, asked, 'If not 80 per cent what and if not Christmas when?' I think that is a relevant question from someone who every day gets out of bed and does not have the luxury of a fixed income. The deputy leader and I had him cry on our shoulder. He had a piece of paper that showed that on that day he was going to lose \$3,200 because he wanted to keep his staff in a job.

I see the member for Cairns shaking his head. If he went down and had a chat to Mr Jones he would find out the real story. He would find out that he is a guy who has put everything on the line. He is his business. There are some days that he does not want to leave his house. He spent three days struggling to get out of bed because his business is his identity. All he wants from this government is a pathway out of the pandemic. He wants a government to choose hope over fear. He wants to know there is a future for him and his family.