



Speech By
Julianne Gilbert

MEMBER FOR MACKAY

Record of Proceedings, 31 August 2021


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Health and Environment Committee, Report

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (6.12 pm): I support the 2020-21 budget estimate report No. 9 of the Health and Environment Committee. I thank committee members, especially the chair, the member for Thuringowa, the parliamentary support secretariat, Minister Yvette D'Ath, her staff and also the hardworking departmental staff who tirelessly prepared for a successful and robust estimates hearing.

Queensland Health has continued to play a leading role in the state's response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Queensland Health has pivoted the health system to ensure that the health of the community is protected to prepare for any outbreaks that may occur. I was listening intently to the member for Mirani talking about his concern for healthcare workers. The best thing the member for Mirani could do is stop running freedom rallies which encourage people to not wear mask, not vaccinate and open the borders, which would have a huge impact on health workers. Look at what is happening in New South Wales. What would happen if we were to have the freedoms that the member for Mirani is out there banging on about in the community?

We can only speculate what effect the LNP's reckless tirade of complaint and negativity is having on the morale of our health workers. Imagine how they must feel month after month when they are staring down the greatest threat to public health that we have faced in a century only to have those opposite label their efforts as a failure. It must be dispiriting to be working so hard to keep fellow Queenslanders safe only to have those efforts so carelessly disparaged by those opposite.

This side of the House stands with our frontline workers and pays tribute to the great contribution that they make every single day to improve the lives of those in need of health care. Queenslanders have so much to feel proud of. We have crushed the latest outbreak of delta. Queensland, this is your achievement. Your compliance, your responsiveness and your endurance has helped us to at least for now suppress the virus and avoid the catastrophe that is unfolding to our south. The member for Mirani needs to think about what he is doing when he is out there campaigning for freedoms.

Queensland's record health budget has focused on recruiting frontline staff and building health infrastructure. We have runs on the board when it comes to infrastructure. I have visited some of our upgrades and rebuilds. In Longreach there have been upgrades to the surgery department, and the maternity department has been overrun by bonny babies with mums in the region choosing to have their babies close to home. I have also visited the new hospital at Roma. We are also reducing emergency and surgical wait times and continuing to protect our state against COVID-19.

This budget is focused on delivering Queensland's economic recovery from COVID-19. It is one that will ensure that our state public health system remains well resourced and financially sustainable to cope with current and future demands. Since March 2020 our health system has faced unprecedented challenges as we manage this pandemic. Our health system has responded strongly to the threat of COVID-19 from our early response of testing and treating to now continuing to manage outbreaks and vaccinating Queenslanders. It is the largest mass vaccination push in the state's history. I have had both my Astra-Zeneca doses, the first at a community pharmacy and the second at my GP. We have rolled out many ways of getting vaccines into people's arms. Get out there and encourage your communities to go online and book their vaccination. This is what we can do for the whole of Queensland. Queensland Health delivers world-class health care and this budget will ensure that it continues to well into the future. Our budget has grown once again.