



Speech By
Rob Molhoek

MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

Record of Proceedings, 31 August 2021

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Health and Environment Committee, Report

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (5.48 pm): I rise to speak in respect of the estimates process and the report of the Health and Environment Committee. At the outset I also want to add my thanks to that of my colleagues in the House to all those frontline health workers the length and breadth of this state who have endured so much over the past 18 months. While we have seen a lot of evidence of COVID in the south-east—and it has certainly had more of an impact and been a bit more visible here—nonetheless it has also had a huge impact on people working in rural and remote hospitals in terms of their need to be prepared and to set aside facilities and space just in case. That has had a huge impact on health workers right across the state, not just here in South-East Queensland.

I have real concerns about the health budget. At the outset of the committee hearing I raised concerns around the actual budget for the current year. While the budget is absolutely an increase over the budget for last year, it represents about a \$70 million underspend compared with actual expenditure for last year. It concerns me that the budget figures for this year have perhaps not factored in, as they should have, the extra costs that could have been planned for and foreseen around COVID. On the Gold Coast alone, the budget is actually some \$50 million less than the total expenditure for the Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service in the previous 12 months. While the budget figure is up on the previous budget figure, the reality is that the budget figure is down on actual expenditure for the previous year.

We should be concerned about the health system across Queensland. It is struggling. Earlier this year the Queensland Audit Office tabled a report titled *Planning for sustainable health services*. It raised significant concerns about the lack of forward planning for Queensland Health into future years. I, like many other members of this House, have had briefings and discussions with healthcare workers, administrators and others within our health services across the state. The story is the same everywhere I go: there is a need for more beds; there are issues around ambulance ramping at hospitals; there are the pressures, quite understandably, that COVID brings; and more recently, with consideration of greater support and the announcements of the government around additional palliative care services in the budget, there are significant concerns right across the state around the delivery of these services.

One concern that has not really received a lot of airtime in the House is the concern raised by the Queensland Audit Office about the lack of workforce planning across the state. I have visited hospitals in rural and remote Queensland, some of which have not had a permanent doctor based at

them for up to 10 years and are completely reliant on locums and fly-in fly-out services to support their local communities. We should be concerned.

I do not believe that this budget goes far enough in terms of its commitments to Queenslanders. I do not believe that the \$2 billion building fund that we heard about really has much substance behind it. It was a great announcement by those on the other side of the House in the lead-up to the budget and during the budget sessions, but when we looked for the detail in the budget documents it simply was not there.

In terms of the Gold Coast and my local patch, I am incredibly proud of the work that the many frontline workers and healthcare workers do at the Gold Coast University Hospital, Robina Hospital and the other health service centres we have, but they, too, are under enormous pressure. It is not just the pressure of COVID. We have seen a significant migration of residents from other parts of Australia over the past six to 12 months particularly. We are being told that over forward estimates we could expect the equivalent of almost the entire population of Townsville to move to the Gold Coast. Queenslanders deserve better. They deserve better planning. We have a lot of work to do in terms of workforce planning across this state.