




Speech By
Robert Skelton

MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

Record of Proceedings, 18 November 2021

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT

Health System

 **Mr SKELTON** (Nicklin—ALP) (2.46 pm): I rise in support of the Queensland Health service. I wish to acknowledge the hard work of our health workers every day in keeping Queensland safe. As a Queenslander I am very proud to see the vaccination rates go up. It is not about individuals; it is about doing it for your mates and keeping everyone safe. I would like to express my extreme disappointment in those opposite and some of their rhetoric about our hardworking health service. It is an expectation of every Queenslander that they have access to a world-class public health system and they do.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr SKELTON: I take that interjection. I will give the House a bit of a history lesson. Queensland was the first state to legislate then provide a public health system. Legislation was introduced into parliament by the then health minister, Tom Foley, in 1944 with the hospitals amendment act. By January 1946 Queensland's free publicly funded hospital treatment became available to Queenslanders. This is no surprise because at the time it was a Cooper Labor government. The funding for the hospital system, as everyone knows, came from starting the Golden Casket lottery.

Mr Millar: Which you guys sold.

Mr SKELTON: Well, we did not need it. I will take that interjection. The reason it was no longer required is that in 1975 the Whitlam Labor government created Medibank and provided funding to the states for their hospitals. At this time, Queensland was the only jurisdiction that had a state system. The additional funding to the state created a windfall which was put into infrastructure projects and wisely spent on the cultural arts centre. After the unfair dismissal of the Whitlam government, the Fraser government kept Medibank so that was okay. They imposed a bigger levy than the one they opposed because that is typical of those opposite—they say one thing and do another. It is important to understand the history of our health system and how the tiers of government can work together or hinder each other. It nauseates me to listen to the constant undermining of our health service by those opposite.

Moving on, Hawke introduced Medicare. This was debated for 20 hours and resisted at every turn by the opposition of the day. I cannot recall whether it was Liberal, National, Country or Liberal-National or whichever iteration of conservatives at the time. They keep rebranding because they have to. The attacks continue and have not stopped since. The attacks on our health system never stop.

Just get on with the job of being in opposition and do something. Support your communities, get them vaccinated, keep them safe and support our workers.