




Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Record of Proceedings, 16 June 2021

MOTION

Health System

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (5.42 pm): I rise to support the motion moved by the shadow minister, because it is important that we talk about the health crisis and it is extremely important that regional Queenslanders have their voices heard in this House and—

Mr Smith interjected.

Mr BENNETT: I take the interjection from the member for Bundaberg early, because it is going to go all night. He is the member who should be fighting for the people of Bundaberg. He is their member. Instead of interjecting about the crisis, he should be fighting for his own region instead of fighting for relevance in his own party.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): I am usually pretty quick, but I must have missed the joke.

Mr BENNETT: I am sorry if you thought it was a joke. I was just taking a very rude interjection, Mr Deputy Speaker, if I can clarify my position.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Due to the level of other interjections, I could not hear the interjection you were taking.

Mr BENNETT: Tonight is an opportunity for the people of Queensland to hear solutions and an opportunity for transparency about the Queensland Health crisis. It would be helpful if we could finally have the truthful facts around the proposed new Bundaberg hospital. Our community deserves a more detailed consultation process, and we want to know why consultation has ceased. It is important for the people of Maryborough and Hervey Bay to also be included in what the future of health services in the Wide Bay health service will include. It is really important that those fast growing communities also get their fair share, and I say that with all sincerity.

I have said for years—and I started this in 2019—that you cannot have a level 5 hospital without a medical school. Since October 2019 we have been fighting the secrecy and lack of information on all of the proposals. 2019 was the start of problems when this government stood by when the CEO was unceremoniously walked out the front door of the hospital. Then the Wide Bay health service had an operating surplus of \$10 million and the service delivery in all areas was 100 per cent of all guidelines. There was also \$2.5 million given to the Wide Bay health service from Queensland Health to set up a regional medical school to employ 20 professors. Today we want to know where those professors are, where the money has gone and, more importantly, what is going to be the future.

Mr Smith interjected.

Mr BENNETT: I take the interjection again, from the member for Bundaberg. If he is going to continue to be disruptive, I will continue to remind the people of Bundaberg what he says about the health service. He should be fighting for them, not trying to get relevance. The level 5 hospital—

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members! Order, member for Bundaberg.

A government member interjected.

Mr BENNETT: I take the interjection from the member for Hervey Bay. The man has come out of hiding. He has been in witness protection for the last six months. He finally got a voice. It is wonderful to hear from him as well.

Government members interjected.

Mr BENNETT: I take the interjection from the member for Maryborough in terms of fighting for a good health service, so I suggest he also puts his efforts into fighting with his own team about getting the services that his electorate wants and needs.

Mr BLEIJIE: I rise to a point of order. My honourable colleague is taking interjections from the member for Maryborough, who is on your warning, which would—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Very astute, member. I was about to pause the clock as you were rising to your feet, but I thought I would hear your point of order just in case you did have something novel to say. Member for Maryborough, you are on a warning. I would ask you to leave the chamber for an hour.

Whereupon the honourable member for Maryborough withdrew from the chamber at 5.45 pm.

Mr BENNETT: A level 5 hospital should be a university hospital. In simple terms, it is about having teaching specialists aligned with the curriculum. It should have been the 'Wide Bay University Hospital'. We know that the business case in 2019 had it as a university level 5 teaching hospital with cancer and full cardiac services, all medical subspecialties, development of education partnerships and appointments of professors or chairs in each specialty. In October 2019 I stood in this place and said that the health service is going to get worse before it gets better in Bundaberg, and here we are on the slippery slope. Waiting lists have blown out. All have increased. I highlight some alarming data around the size and lengths of waiting lists for outpatients, endoscopy and surgery. Our emergency department has got worse—

Mr Smith interjected.

Mr BENNETT: I will take the interjections from the member for Bundaberg all night if he wants to continue down this path.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members! Pause the clock. Member for Bundaberg, you are on a warning.

Mr BENNETT: Our emergency department has got a lot worse. We are struggling to fill medical vacancies. Executives have left and have not been replaced. The performance at the hospital has slipped and the Wide Bay health service's financial deficit is astronomical. This was so concerning that I wrote to the Auditor-General in 2020 asking it to conduct a financial audit, and that audit last year confirmed our worst fears. It is important that we talk about capital expenditure and the importance of what it means, and let me remind the House: in 2020-21 it was \$1.4 billion whereas this year it is \$1.3 billion. Clearly we need to acknowledge what this motion is about. Let us shine a light on ambulance ramping. Let us start doing things differently. Let us get the 230,000 people off the waiting list for the waiting list. Let us make sure that those people in my electorate who are waiting for dental services, like the 150,000 across Queensland—some waiting for 10 years—can at least get their service delivered when it should be. The other important—

Ms Boyd interjected.

Mr BENNETT: I take the interjection from the member for Pine Rivers. It is not all about a federal blame game; you have a role in Queensland Health to provide services!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members! Comments will come through the chair.

Mr BENNETT: Let us talk about the health data transparency. The government cannot just continue to pick and choose what it gives to Queenslanders. That is why we have a crisis. That is why we need to back in the motion to shine a light on this disgrace.