



Speech By  
**Stephen Bennett**


**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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Record of Proceedings, 14 October 2021

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT**

**Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service**

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (2.36 pm): What has changed since I spoke about the Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service last sitting? We have had countless staff continuing to come to our office calling for action. The Together union members have also voted unanimously on a vote of no confidence in the Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service Board. It is time we seriously look at this. What does the minister need to do to sack this group and put in some governance that we can all work with?

Ambulance ramping is at 24 per cent in Bundaberg and 30 per cent in Hervey Bay. One in four patients are not seen within the recommended time. The worst part about it that I am hearing from staff is that they are terrified to raise issues because of the bullying culture that exists within the Wide Bay health service. I hear that staff are leaving.

Back in 2019 I called for a full external investigation into the board chair's actions in the so-called sacking of the former chief of staff. I said back then, 'This is going to get a lot worse before it gets better.' We have seen that in the Auditor-General's financial reports last year and in the service delivery standards I just mentioned. I think that full external investigation into the board chair's actions needs to happen. I also said in 2019—

I know that when the performance of this high-performing health service starts to slide in my region—and it will—it will be the minister's fault for not acting sooner. It is easier to find a new board chair than to find another high-performing chief executive. Why would any health professionals or executives now come to Bundaberg to work ...

Two years on my prediction is 100 per cent correct. The Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service Board is failing our hospitals across the region at a time when we need them the most. The hospital staff are calling for the board to be sacked. I am giving them a voice here this afternoon.

Additionally, we cannot forget the 2018-2022 strategic plan that I mentioned last sitting week, because it is important that we understand just how out of touch it has become. At the beginning, the plan outlines seven goals it will achieve—not one has been completed. Again, the plan outlines what the community will see by 2022. It includes: substantial progress towards a refurbished hospital, including increased access to level 5 services; an integrated health campus providing training; increased subspecialists; and on it goes. None of this has happened. Clearly, these are complete and utter failures.

Again, I call on the minister to step up and take our Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service Board to the cleaners. We need governance and to put people in there we can trust and, more importantly, people the hardworking doctors and nurses and allied health professionals can work with. The culture is rotten in Queensland Health and our frontline staff need more help. Healthcare workers are giving it their all, but the system is letting them down.

I think it is important that we recognise that, after two years since the Wide Bay health service chair sacked the CEO, there is still continuing legal action going on. It is costing taxpayers a fortune to try to stick up for this board chair, while they continue to put the CEO through the ringer. There are no charges and no findings, but we are still victimising a CEO who had the hospital performing at a really high level.

I stand up on behalf of the Together union members and on behalf of the people who continue to come to our office. I thank the member for Hervey Bay for standing up for his community and asking questions as well. The CEO has to go.

*(Time expired)*