



Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Record of Proceedings, 1 December 2021

MOTION

Bundaberg, Health Services

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (4.59 pm): I move—

That this House notes:

1. the decline in the delivery of health services in Bundaberg as evidenced by a 9.9 per cent increase in ambulance ramping since June 2020
2. 44 per cent of emergency department patients at Bundaberg Hospital were not seen within clinically recommended time frames in the September 2021 quarter
3. the election promises by the member for Bundaberg for the Palaszczuk Labor government to construct a level 5 hospital in Bundaberg
4. the Palaszczuk Labor government's failure to provide public breast-screening facilities in the Bundaberg region.

and calls on:

1. the member for Bundaberg to fulfil his election promise to deliver a level 5 hospital for Bundaberg;
2. the member for Bundaberg to support the residents of the Wide Bay region in their efforts to gain access to modern breast-screening facilities; and
3. the Palaszczuk Labor government to listen to the people of Bundaberg and provide all the health services which they expect and deserve.

It is no small thing when you have a number of constituents continually coming to your office talking about the health services that people expect. The fact that I have had a number of people approach my office about the breast screening service is very worrying and the answer from the minister indicated that there were serious problems in recruitment, but all of these things add up to a bleak future given the way the Bundaberg Hospital is sliding. I have raised this issue many times in this place since the sacking of the CEO in 2019 and the subsequent decline which has seen, according to the Auditor-General's financial reports last year, a \$40 million debt rather than the \$10 million surplus the hospital had two years earlier.

We have spoken about the ambulance ramping and the emergency department, but again this is nothing new. A year or two ago the *Courier-Mail* reported that 200 people had walked out of the emergency department in Bundaberg in one month because they could not get seen. The people of Bundaberg and the wider Burnett deserve a world-class system, yet they are not seeing it under Labor. It is not the nurses, it is not the paramedics and it is not the doctors; it is all about bad management.

Government members interjected.

Mr BENNETT: Those opposite may want to interject, but I remember what a basket case it was in 2011. This is a serious issue. Anna Bligh wanted to split health apart in 2011. My point is that tonight those opposite can yell, scream and interject all they like and talk about the nonsense that they want to talk about, but even by putting more staff on the services are getting worse. Let us not take this cookie-cutter approach: the fact is that the government has lost control of the hospital service, it is in crisis and we are here to debate it again to shine a light on the issue for those people that I am proud to represent.

The people of the region were betrayed in 2020 by the local member, who promised a level 5 hospital. This is a disturbing backflip. It has also been confirmed by the health minister that the government now wants to call it level 5 services instead. I will talk about that more later, but the response to the question on notice from the minister was that the government had to change the language because the people of Bundaberg did not understand what was happening and the government had to tell them that it is more about services and not a level 5 hospital and it is not about five storeys. The people of Bundaberg were indicated to be mugs who could not understand what they were promised. We all remember. It was quite clear. A level 5 hospital was loud and clear when it suited the government, but it backflipped as soon as it could.

We heard Tom Smith and his Labor government colleagues talk about delivering the best public health services to our community for the growing need now and into the future, and the member for Bundaberg, Tom Smith, did make all of those promises. What is worse, this deceit by the local member for Bundaberg, Mr Tom Smith, was demonstrated because he had all of these things on his social media page, and I am happy to table those if I get a chance tonight. What happened? He took everything down—backflipped, weaseled out of it, took everything down and threw all of those promises out, never to be held accountable. He is being held accountable here tonight for those promises to the people of Bundaberg.

Those opposite made the commitment and made the promises, and the proof was backed up by not only the Premier but also the health minister. I have spoken about the condescending tone of the health minister's response—that is, the minister said that we have to talk in plain English for those people in Bundaberg because they are confusing the reference to mean that the proposed hospital would be five storeys. I say to the minister that that is downright offensive and the people of Bundaberg are not fools and will not be fooled by what is going on here tonight.

A survey out today shows some interesting facts, so do not take my word for it but the survey results from the AMA Council of Doctors. That survey found that 11 per cent of junior doctors are working more than 90 hours and are burnt out. What is more worrying is that 11 per cent were not advised of how to claim their overtime. One of the most troubling results was that 50 per cent of those junior doctors said they were concerned about making a clinical error due to fatigue. Close to 20 per cent experienced and witnessed bullying, discrimination and sexual harassment, with half saying that they were too concerned to report it because of the negative consequences. They are being hushed up and they are being covered up. Let us not forget the sacking of the CEO in 2019. There is a steep decline, and it is getting worse.