



Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2021


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL

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Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill

Health and Environment Committee, Report

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (4.37 pm): I was pleased to attend the 2020 estimates hearing as the new Minister for Health and Ambulance Services. At the outset I want to pay tribute to all of our hardworking health professionals right across Queensland for their dedication. They have certainly gone above and beyond the call of duty in recent times, and I know they are still working just as hard in 2021 not only to collectively fight against COVID-19 but also provide a world-class hospital and healthcare service for the people of Queensland.

The Palaszczuk government understands the importance of our health system. That is why the budget handed down by the Treasurer last year delivered record funding for our health system of \$21.8 billion to support our health professionals deliver services in Queensland. This is an increase of 9.5 per cent on the previous financial year. We are getting on with the job of ensuring Queenslanders have access to the services they need. That is why we are investing over \$1.6 billion to fund an expansive capital works program to deliver improved and new ambulance and health facilities. However, while new and improved hospital and health buildings are important, what is more important is the people who deploy their skills in those facilities to support Queenslanders' health. That is why we are providing for an extra 9,475 doctors, nurses, paramedics and allied health professionals over the next four years.

Turning to those opposite, it is disappointing but not surprising that they continue to, firstly, not understand the standing and sessional orders of this House and, secondly, call for witnesses to attend but then not ask them a question. The Manager of Opposition Business on 3 December 2020 stood in this chamber and demanded that the Chief Health Officer be present and allowed to be questioned. He concluded his monologue by stating—

On the condition that the minister has assured me that she will make the Chief Health Officer available, I am not going to oppose the motion—

He went on to say—

I do hope the minister allows the Chief Health Officer to be asked questions directly because the minister can in fact do that on the day during her estimates process.

I responded by stating, 'The Chief Health Officer will be there and will be able to respond to questions.' Fast-forward a week to during the estimates hearing, and guess who was available and ready to answer questions pursuant to the standing orders: the Chief Health Officer. Guess how many questions those opposite asked the Chief Health Officer: zero. On review of Hansard, I am advised that the shadow health minister did not even mention the Chief Health Officer once.

What happened between 12.36 pm on Thursday, 3 December—when the member for Kawana was beating his chest demanding the CHO be present and be asked questions—and a week later at 9 am when the opposition did not ask the CHO a question and did not mention the position? One can only assume that the opposition are fully supportive of our amazing Chief Health Officer and the actions taken by this government to protect Queenslanders during COVID-19. Despite the views of those opposite, the Palaszczuk government fully appreciates the high calibre advice from the Chief Health Officer and thanks her and her team for their support during COVID-19.

I thank the committee for their detailed examination of the budget and look forward to their ongoing contribution to ensure that Queenslanders continue to have access to world-class health care. I would like to also thank my department for their efforts, particularly in preparing for the budget and estimates hearing. The team, which was so ably led by Mary Weaver, did a great job and I thank them all for their efforts.

We have heard a lot from those opposite during this debate about parliamentary processes, but conveniently they forget about what they did when they were in government. The reality is that the statistics speak for themselves. Over the entire seven days, 51 per cent of the time was utilised by non-government members, compared to 37 per cent by government members. In terms of questions, 25 per cent of questions were asked by government members, while 75 per cent of questions were asked by non-government members. That is around 323 questions by government members, compared to 991 questions by non-government members. If those opposite cannot get the information they want out of 991 questions, then they should pack up and go home.

I note that questions were asked about sitting days and the virtual parliament. At the outset, I want to thank the parliament for their efforts in setting up contingencies to enable continued democracy in the people's house. I note that those opposite only complain about estimates when they are in opposition. I understand they have spent more time in opposition than in government—and it has been a very long time—but there is a reason for that. When they are in government, the people of Queensland see the damage they do and the people have made a choice over and over again. They have chosen the Palaszczuk Labor government three times in a row now because they know the Palaszczuk government is delivering for the people of Queensland.