




Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

Record of Proceedings, 21 April 2021

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Health Infrastructure; Hospitals, Demand

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (9.53 am): Last week the member for Cook and I saw firsthand the important new health infrastructure being delivered by the Palaszczuk government in the Torres Strait and the cape. I thank the member for Cook for joining me on Thursday Island. This includes a major \$46 million refurbishment of the Thursday Island Hospital and the Thursday Island Primary Health Care Centre, with works commencing this week.

This investment will go towards the refurbishment of ward areas, the construction of a new operating theatre, as well as a staged roof replacement. We were also able to check out the Mossman Hospital and the amazing work that is being done there. It is near completion. They hope that by mid-May they will be opening the new emergency department facilities, which is really exciting. This is yet another example of the Palaszczuk government's commitment to investing in the health system, whether it be health infrastructure or our health workforce.

Now more than ever it is vital that we have proper investment in our health system. There is no doubt that our health system, particularly our hospitals, are seeing sustained, significant and unseasonably high demand. This has an impact not only on our hospital staff but also on our exceptionally hardworking Queensland Ambulance Service workforce. As health minister, I am committed to ensuring that we address these demand pressures to ensure Queenslanders continue to receive the world-class health care they have come to know and expect under the Palaszczuk government.

To understand the current pressures being faced by our healthcare system we only need to look at the data. From 1 July 2020 to 31 January 2021 there were over 1.39 million presentations to Queensland's emergency departments—an increase of 11.6 per cent. In addition to emergency demand, our health system is currently providing beds to almost 600 people who should be in disability or aged-care accommodation. This is also impacting our health budget, costing taxpayers approximately \$817,000 a day—\$817,000 a day!

As was agreed at the PAAC meeting I attended last parliamentary sitting week, there are no silver bullets to fixing these issues, but the Palaszczuk government is taking strong, decisive action to support our amazing health workers in our hospitals. The amount of \$57 million has already been invested to help manage pressure in our hospital system to focus on emergency department avoidance, emergency department capacity and efficiency strategies. In addition, the Department of Health has allocated a further \$25 million to commission additional inpatient bed capacity. The first \$15 million of this funding has been allocated to hospital and health services to support an additional 130 beds to our system.

As well as these significant investments, our health system is implementing workforce innovations that will ensure we give more efficient care to Queenslanders. For example, the Queensland Ambulance Service's Local Area Assessment Response Unit ensures that paramedics can operate with an extended scope and provide more care in the home or facilitate alternative pathways. We have also

expanded the operation of the Queensland Ambulance Service mental health co-responder model across various HHSs which has helped divert more than 650 patients from our EDs—64 per cent of all patients seen by the co-responders in our pilot area in 12 months were diverted from the emergency department. That is a fantastic result, and we are now extending those services.

The health system is facing unprecedented demand, but our amazing health workers are doing a brilliant job. We are ensuring that 99.7 per cent of our category 1 patients are seen in the clinically recommended time frame. It is important to acknowledge that we do not pretend that demand pressures are not there. We have to acknowledge that there has been pressure on health systems across the globe. Every country is seeing those pressures. With our record health budget—I thank the Treasurer for this amazing budget of \$21 billion—and with our hardworking health workers, I know we will be able to get through these difficult times together.