



Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

Record of Proceedings, 31 August 2021


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Health and Environment Committee, Report

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (5.33 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Health and Environment Committee's report into the recent estimates hearings. In doing so, I thank the chair, the committee, the secretariat, the parliamentary staff and Hansard for their attendance and efforts in ensuring the smooth running of the 2021 estimates hearings. I will just pick up on the member for Mudgeeraba's comments about health workers having to do more for less. I think she was reminiscing about the LNP days, because we have continued to increase our workforce, increase their budget and support them in the roles that they perform.

Ms Bates interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Lui): Order!

Mrs D'ATH: We do not stand up saying that they are falling behind in vaccinations, despite the hard work they are doing. We do not criticise what they are doing in emergency departments—

Ms Bates interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Mudgeeraba, you are warned under the standing orders.

Mrs D'ATH: The Palaszczuk government understands the importance of a strong health system, and that is why we have delivered a record health budget, providing \$22.2 billion into the system to enable our hardworking and dedicated hospital and health services to get on with the job of protecting Queenslanders. Our HHSs are designed to make local decisions regarding the health care of Queenslanders in their region. With the funding provided, we know that our amazing Queensland Health and Queensland Ambulance Service health heroes are there to support you.

I have indicated previously that our health system is under pressure, but so is the rest of the country and this is something that the LNP fails to recognise. COVID-19 is putting pressure on the health system like never before, and most states have publicly recognised this, including the Liberal Minister for Health in New South Wales, Brad Hazzard. In New South Wales, I am advised that they have cancelled their non-urgent elective surgeries, including in some private hospitals, to deal with COVID-19. In Queensland, even during the worst pandemic in a century, our health system continues to operate at a high level, including in the delivery of planned care and elective surgeries. While it is

unrealistic to think we can avoid the disruptions to our system generated by COVID-19, our frontline health staff and the processes that support them continue to stand up to the challenges of the virus. I acknowledge the health workers who are still in quarantine since the start of the Indooroopilly cluster outbreak due to being close contacts and family members of school students.

In May last year, the number of Queenslanders waiting longer than clinically recommended for elective surgery peaked at 5,166. Our government made a decision to invest \$250 million to reduce that list. As at 1 July this year, I am advised that number had fallen to 629—from 5,166 to 629, a decrease of 88 per cent. I can say that that figure of 629 was never achieved by the LNP when they were in government. I take this opportunity to thank each and every Queensland healthcare worker for their efforts, not only dealing with COVID-19 but dealing with business-as-usual activities to continue to provide health care to Queenslanders.

We are also getting on with ensuring that Queenslanders have the health infrastructure they need, and this year's budget will see a number of infrastructure upgrades across Queensland, including in Camooweal, St George, Morven, Charleville, Blackwater, Bundaberg, Toowoomba, Townsville, Atherton, Sarina and Kingaroy, just to name a few. Those opposite have been running around the state claiming all manners of things. They have been attacking the health system, which in turn is an attack on our hardworking health professionals. I must say on the record that the way the member for Mudgeeraba conducted herself in the hearings was appalling. It was borderline bullying of our public servants. It was unprofessional and it was disrespectful.

Ms Bates interjected.

Mrs D'ATH: I will take that interjection. The member for Mudgeeraba says it is her job. It is not her job to attack public servants. It is certainly her job to put questions, but it is hard to put a question and get an answer when you constantly interject and badger the people you are asking questions of. The member for Mudgeeraba's bedside manner has a lot to be desired, and I am glad she is no longer a practising nurse as her patients would most certainly not have a pleasant experience. The member for Mudgeeraba's deliberate misquoting of public servants, her aggressive style of questioning and her verballing of them leaves a lot to be desired, and I call on the member to apologise and correct the record—although I must say her shark mask got many chuckles. I do not know if it was supposed to be serious but everyone else thought it was a joke.

I thank my hardworking director-general, Dr John Wakefield, and his entire team for everything they do. It has been a tough period in the health space but the leadership of Queensland Health are focusing on one thing—strong and positive health outcomes for Queensland that keep Queenslanders safe. I would like to finish by acknowledging the former Queensland Ambulance Service Commissioner, Russell Bowles, for his many decades of service and his leadership of the extremely professional organisation. I thank Dr Young for her leadership as well in keeping us safe.