




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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MOTION

Minister for Health and Ambulance Services

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (5.16 pm): We have just heard more rabble from the opposition. Here is a lesson for the LNP and the member for Kawana: do not abuse our regional health workers. There is only one person we do not have any confidence in in this House, and that is the member for Mudgeeraba, the shadow minister for health. She should resign and apologise for her disgraceful remarks about the hardworking, dedicated, professional health workers in regional Queensland.

I rise to support our health minister and support the motion condemning the member for Mudgeeraba for her comments calling regional health workers in regional Queensland duds. Worse still, the member for Mudgeeraba refuses to apologise. Predictably, there was a backlash from regional health workers and unions, including people from my electorate in Thuringowa. Grant says, 'The shadow minister for health should apologise for her remarks. The silence is deafening.' Alexander said, 'She should apologise and resign her portfolio.' Carol said, 'She should apologise.' Tom, a nurse, said, 'Thank you, Aaron, for standing up for health workers in Queensland. Every day we leave our loved ones to go to work and help those who are in need of health care and this is the thanks we get from the shadow minister. She should apologise or resign. We don't need such leaders.' Brad said, 'Thanks for standing up for regional health workers.'

The shadow minister for health needs to own up to the mistake. They are disgraceful comments and the member knows it. There was a decade of failing to support health workers and restore Medicare rebates in the bush under the former LNP federal governments of Turnbull, Morrison and Abbott. It is hard enough attracting health workers to regional Queensland and retaining them without insulting them with such horrible language, calling them duds. Again I call on the Leader of the Opposition to show some backbone, show a bit of ticker, show some intestinal fortitude and sack the shadow minister for health. She is a disgrace and the Leader of the Opposition knows he needs to stand up and apologise to the people of regional Queensland. The member for Mudgeeraba no longer has the confidence of regional health workers. Her position is untenable.

I will get straight to the point of what our health minister has done in Townsville. After the LNP cut 398 staff in their time, including 156 nurses, and took \$1.6 billion out of the health budget, in Townsville we have restored 143 beds and we have put on 633 extra frontline staff—171 doctors, 254 nurses and 208 health professionals.

That is what Labor does. We back our health workers; we do not sack our health workers. The Palaszczuk government continues to deliver: three new hospitals and 11 hospital expansions, including Townsville, and in my electorate the Kirwan health precinct, which was overlooked in their time. We are sinking \$40 million into it, to redevelop it and provide modern services for our hardworking health professionals in regional Queensland. They are not duds. This is in addition to the long list of new satellite hospitals and upgraded hospital and health facilities right across Queensland.

In contrast to the LNP, we have hired almost 20,000 health workers: 106 more doctors, 10,000 more nurses and midwives, 5,000 more allied health professionals and, one of my favourites, 1,103 more ambulance officers, paramedics, EMD staff—those hardworking frontline staff. The LNP needs to grab a mirror, have a long look into it and understand their record of failure in delivering for regional Queensland. I will double down and ask that the shadow minister for health resigns. Stand up! Own it! You were wrong!

(Time expired)