




Speech By
Brent Mickelberg

MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

Record of Proceedings, 26 May 2022

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (3.21 pm): It is clear that Queensland Health is in crisis. Our public hospitals are in crisis, we have a mental health crisis across Queensland and Queenslanders are losing faith in the state government's ability to provide them with timely access to health care as and when they need it. This inquiry, which was initiated by the state government for the purposes of attacking the federal government, has not delved far enough into the heart of the crisis. That should concern every Queenslander because without an open and transparent examination of all of the issues nothing will change. Queensland needs change. I know my constituents in Buderim and residents of the Sunshine Coast do. The health minister can blame the pandemic all she likes, but the truth is that this problem existed long before we had ever heard of COVID-19.

What this inquiry does show is that the state government has lost its biggest political weapon. Thirty-six of the inquiry recommendations are directed at the federal government. The game is up because this state Labor government will no longer be able to play the blame game with Canberra; they will have to look in their own backyard. Are there issues with the provision of GP services in aged care? Yes, but to pretend the state government is not responsible for many of the failures does not cut it. Even the Australian Medical Association called this report for what it is: a blame-shifting exercise.

Fixing this crisis is far more important than political pointscoring. Yesterday, when faced with criticism of Queensland Health, we heard government ministers and backbenchers talking about themselves. This issue is not about politicians. At its core, this is about Queenslanders being able to trust that an ambulance will arrive when they ring triple 0 in their hour of need. It is about having elective surgery delivered on time so that Queenslanders do not suffer in pain for longer than necessary. It is about knowing that your loved ones will get the emergency treatment that they need in the event of an accident or serious illness.

The Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service has one of the worst performance records in the state. In fact, alongside Mount Isa, the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service was assessed as being on performance level 4, the lowest level. When the north-west district reached that level the board was disbanded, but not on the Sunshine Coast. On the Sunshine Coast the problems have been allowed to fester. The Sunshine Coast University Hospital and Nambour Hospital topped the list for the longest wait times for elective surgery in all of Queensland. SCUH is a world-class facility. It is only five years old and is located in one of the most sought-after parts of South-East Queensland to live. Previously in the House I have addressed the toxic culture under the reign of the former CEO, Naomi Dwyer. The wait times and hospital performance should never have been allowed to get to the point at which they are now.

Since raising in this chamber the issue of the toxic culture within the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service, I have been approached by countless whistleblowers wanting to tell their stories—doctors, nurses, administrators. All of their problems boil down to mismanagement at the top level. The

bullying and shameful behaviour by those in charge drove away experienced medical professionals. I note the issues with the attraction and retention of clinical staff in rural and regional Queensland. The Sunshine Coast is by no means rural, but I think the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service needs to take a long hard look at how it retains staff. Even under the new CEO we have seen no acknowledgement of the bullying and toxic culture that continues to pervade parts of the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service.

Around one in two ambulances have been ramped at the Sunshine Coast University Hospital and we know that Queensland has the worst rate of ramping in all of Australia. Yet in the 269 pages of this inquiry report, ambulance ramping is not mentioned once. I shake my head at the fact that the Premier and health minister are still trying to ignore the problem. They are ignoring the problem despite the LNP constantly fighting to get a better outcome for Queenslanders.

I note the latest performance data was finally released this morning. The statistics show a 255 per cent increase in the number of patients waiting longer than the clinically recommended time frame for elective surgery in Queensland. I repeat: a 255 per cent increase. We have been asking repeatedly, on behalf of all Queenslanders, for the data to be released. The only reason I can think that that data was withheld is because the health crisis has worsened, and we know it has. What the Labor government needs to understand is that hiding information from Queenslanders does not fix the problem. It does not get an ambulance to a grandfather in Mountain Creek any faster. It does not help a Buderim mother get an appointment with a specialist or a Sippy Downs girl get her surgery on time.

Queenslanders deserve better than the cover-up and blame-shifting that pervades the state government's response to the Queensland Health crisis. Queenslanders deserve openness and transparency. They deserve better.

(Time expired)