




Speech By
Bryson Head

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

Record of Proceedings, 1 September 2022

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT

Callide Electorate, Maternity Services

 **Mr HEAD** (Callide—LNP) (2.24 pm): I rise to speak about a matter that we would not think would be a reality in a First World developed nation. I have recently been informed that the last maternity ward in the entire electorate of Callide has been placed on bypass. This means that, of 14 hospitals, we have not one operational birthing unit. Yvette from Chinchilla had to go through the traumatic experience of giving birth by the side of the Warrego Highway due to the fact that the local maternity ward was not in operation. Her baby, Beatrix, literally has 'Warrego Highway' on her birth certificate.

Some might say that is because Chinchilla is a small town. Well, a couple of decades ago, Chinchilla had a fully functioning, well-staffed maternity ward. It had less than half the population it has today. We now have 7,000 people living in the town and thousands more in nearby communities. With the Biloela maternity ward now on bypass, thousands of mums from Central Queensland have the risk of the same thing happening to them. Members might say that they can travel to the next one up the road. Well, not if you live in Central Queensland because the next closest maternity ward at Gladstone is also on bypass.

A whistleblower recently told me that some of the trips up the Bruce Highway from Gladstone to Rockhampton Hospital have been 'hairy'. If that does not speak of the risks that these women are facing, I do not know what does. Mothers in labour should be able to remain in a safe environment at their local hospital. Instead, they are taking up the resources of our paramedics or risking having their family and friends rush them up the road. I would like to think that not one member of this House thinks this situation is satisfactory. At the end of the day, actions speak louder than words. This is an absolute disgrace, and it is appalling that the current government treat rural and regional Queenslanders with so much disdain that they refuse to maintain the bare basics of health services.

Fair and equitable health services formed a key part of my campaign, and I can assure the people of Callide that it is still a key part of what I am fighting for today as their new member for Callide. One day on the campaign trail, a mother who almost had the same experience as Yvette came to me and thanked me for taking up this fight. I can assure every new mum of Callide that I will keep fighting until we see fair and equitable health and maternity services returned to the bush. That is why I am calling on the Minister for Health to commit to restoring these services as a top priority.