




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR BANCROFT

Record of Proceedings, 26 May 2022

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (3.06 pm): I rise to speak to report No. 18. I look forward to hearing members on the other side talk more about this report. I am the chair of one of these portfolio committees. We have a saying, which members have heard before: if you want better answers, ask better questions. It is not that hard. I look forward to the estimates process this year. I will be making sure that all members follow the standing orders.

We are talking about what is in this report; members can quite easily get a copy out the back. My biggest takeaway from this report is the range of reasons we need a fifty-fifty funding split with the federal government. I welcome the election of the federal Labor Albanese government. It will be much better to deal with them on issues such as the fifty-fifty funding split. I know that we will get a much better reception from them than we did from the previous mob. The Morrison government made decisions that placed great pressure on our hospitals and our public health system. We know the story: over 500 Queenslanders are in public hospital beds awaiting their aged-care package. They are ready to leave our hospitals but they cannot because they cannot get an aged-care package. At last count there were 108 people in hospital beds in Metro North awaiting an aged-care package.

We know that 37 per cent of aged-care residents over 65 were taken to an emergency department at least once in 2018-19. I welcome the commitment from the Albanese Labor government to put nurses back in nursing homes. It is very clear that the former federal government was using our hospitals to provide the health care that they should have been funding. They were relying on us to do the work they should have been doing.

We know how badly they treated aged-care workers. They ignored the Productivity Commission's recommendations about the aged-care system. Aged-care workers had no choice but to go on strike to get better pay. That was something that I know they did not want to do but they felt they had to do.

I point out that this report shows that people have been flooding into our emergency departments because the Morrison-Dutton government starved our GP system. They froze Medicare rebates from 2013 to 2017. Some services were frozen until June 2020. That means people attending a long visit with a GP were facing an average out-of-pocket cost of \$41. I commend the committee for revealing this kind of information in this outstanding report.

This report also points out that GPs lost an average of \$109,000 due to the rebate freeze. They were getting squeezed. They are trying to provide this service yet the rebate freeze means they were suffering in what they could offer. It is no wonder that the AMAQ said that the rebates do not reflect the cost of providing GP services. Once again I point to the report where those opposite can read about that. It is no wonder our GPs have found it very hard to provide the services that Queenslanders need when the Medicare rebate system has been treated so shabbily by the Morrison government. There are many other reasons why we need that fifty-fifty split because of the damage done by previous LNP governments. I look forward over the coming years to working with the Albanese government to improve the system.