




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BROADWATER

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Health System

 **Mr CRISAFULLI** (Broadwater—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.00 pm): Queensland Health is facing its worst health crisis, and Queenslanders are finding it increasingly difficult to trust what this state government and this minister say. There is a widening gap between what the minister knows and what the minister is sharing with Queenslanders, and as a result the health crisis has continued to spiral for seven long years. There is a cost of inaction. It can be delays to surgery. It can be delays in getting to hospital. At its worst, the culture of cover-ups costs Queenslanders their lives. At the heart of this crisis is a state government that does not listen. It cannot be trusted and it is no longer open with Queenslanders. The health system is on red alert, the health minister is red-faced, and the government has been caught red-handed withholding information for its political survival rather than for patient survival.

The failings at Mackay are damning, and the government knew about them. The government said we were scaremongering. The health minister would not condemn it, and today the Premier would not own it, but that statement was made from that side of the House. Do you know who is worse off when a government will not own its mistakes and will not work to fix it? Queenslanders are worse off. Queenslanders are living through a health crisis seven years in the making.

In Mackay, what we have seen through the report into obstetrics and gynaecology is a catastrophic failure—three babies' lives lost and young mums who will never again be able to have a child. We met one who was 24 years of age and she will never again have a child. Next week the health minister will finally go and speak to those victims. It will be the same faces that we saw a year ago—the same people who bravely came forward and shared their stories one year ago when we were told we were scaremongering, when we were told there was 'nothing to see here', when we were told we were politicising it. How can Queenslanders and these women trust the minister and the government to fix this when they knew about it and they did not do a thing about it?

The report was delayed several times over several months, but the most damning delay was in the final week when, for political expediency, they could not even front up on the Wednesday when they had booked a plane ticket. They could not even front up because it did not suit their agenda and it might cloud the political media cycle, so those women waited another two days and they waited two days to be shut out. The only people who spoke with them were the member for Whitsunday and the shadow health minister. Those women were not given that opportunity. Then the minister, after her press conference and after those women were locked out, mentioned how sorry she was and about her desire to fix a failed system seven years in the making.

We raised the issues about the surgeon. We asked the minister what she knew about the reprimands. We asked what the minister did when she found out about them. Most importantly, we asked how many patients were put in harm's way between when the minister was informed and when they finally acted. My goodness, I hear the word 'swiftly', but there was not swift action at all. There

were delays. The only reason there were delays is that it did not suit their political agenda—it did not pass through the spin cycle of the 30 media spinners—and as a result patients were put in harm's way. Boy oh boy, we will not let the government off the hook because those people deserve justice and the system deserves to be repaired.

We raised the three incidents over the 48-hour period. Let me recap to the government what they involved. A woman died due to the wrong drug dose, a stent was placed in the wrong kidney of a patient and there was an undetected heart attack in an intensive care unit patient. The minister did not even respond to a letter. Today she accused the shadow minister of not supplying enough information. I am sorry, but the way Westminster government works is that the minister actually has to take charge of her department. Yes, I agree the shadow health minister would do a far better job running the health system, but right now this minister is the one who has to accept responsibility for her failings.

We raised with the DNA inquiry the failings in the forensic services lab and the cultural issues. We said that someone had to take responsibility. When we raised it, the minister said she had no idea why we would want an inquiry and that we were politicking. The minister said there was 'nothing to see here'. Whistleblowers were discredited. Dr Kirsty Wright was discredited, for goodness sake. Imagine being a young health worker working in that forensic services lab and you turn on the TV and see the vitriol coming from the minister. Do you think you would come forward if you were a whistleblower? There is not a chance, and that is the problem with this government. That is what Coaldrake highlighted and that is why we need a royal commission into the way this mob operate. There is no way a whistleblower can feel confident when the minister was harassing and making allegations of politicking. All the opposition and whistleblowers wanted was for a lab that did not allow rapists and murderers to walk free and for innocent people to be given a day of justice.

We raised ambulance bypass. Why did we raise ambulance bypass? Because the ambos told us to look for it. The RTI exposed that for months the government said this was not happening. The government said it had not happened for a decade, but it was happening on their watch. The briefings show that the minister knew. There is an increasing disconnect between what the minister is saying publicly and what she is being told privately. There is only one reason for that disconnect—that is, because the political agenda of the day does not suit making that open and transparent because after seven years there is no-one left to blame. After seven years of a failing health system, ambulance ramping has gone from 15 per cent to 45 per cent. In the case of the Redlands, as the member for Oodgeroo has highlighted, it is at 73 per cent—that is, three in four who turn up wait at the end of a ramp. The question remains: when will it be back to 15 per cent? When it was 30 per cent, former premier Bligh said Queensland Health was a basket case. Queenslanders will not accept a fall of a couple of per cent and say that the job is done. When will it be at the 15 per cent that this government had when it came to office and said the health system was in crisis?

Then there are the deaths in the ambulances. We were told it was not happening. An RTI from a very short window just in the south-east revealed 20 Queenslanders had died waiting for an ambo, in an ambo on the way to hospital after delays or at the end of an ambulance ramp—and the government said that was not happening. We want to see the figures for every part of Queensland. Queenslanders deserve to know what steps are being taken to heal the Queensland Health crisis.

We were told about category 1a patients. Do members remember that? The Deputy Premier got the talking notes. The health minister said every category 1a patient was being seen on time. That is absolutely categorically not true. The minister said every category 1a patient was being seen on time. That was a category 1a fabrication. It is not happening. The report that we had to go looking for—not that the government shares the information—showed just how false that statement was.

Do members want to know what is most troubling? Every single one of these things has come to light since we were in this chamber last. In the last six weeks! This is what this government has presided over in the last six weeks. Queensland Health is in crisis and no-one will accept responsibility or accountability.

In a moment, the deputy leader is going to explain how this manifests to the dysfunction of the government. Then the shadow health spokesperson will say why this matters to Queenslanders. Let me make this pledge: there are solutions on the table. We are listening. We are out there. We fronted up 25 times to a town hall and there will be more. Queenslanders deserve a world-class health system. This government has stopped listening, the government has stopped being transparent, and nothing will change until the government does.