




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BROADWATER

Record of Proceedings, 25 October 2022

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Minister for Health and Ambulance Services; Health System

 **Mr CRISAFULLI** (Broadwater—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.00 pm): Have we really reached the stage in Queensland where a minister cannot be held accountable for promises she has made directly herself? If you cannot honour a promise, do not make it in the first place. If you make a commitment, follow through and deliver it. The minister's performance today lacked ministerial accountability and responsibility. The government is not accepting questions we are asking on behalf of mothers, on behalf of grieving women who have asked the question themselves publicly, who are calling for accountability, who are calling for an end to the Queensland Health crisis. What should we do: ignore their pleas? The government can ignore public servant whistleblowers; we will not. The government can ignore frontline health staff; we will not. The government can ignore patients; we will not.

We have many more questions to ask the government. We expect ministerial accountability, we expect integrity and we expect the minister to be held accountable for the department she administers. I have bad news for the Minister for Health: the town hall meetings that have outlined the crisis which is raging through Queensland Health will continue. They will continue until the minister listens, until she accepts solutions and until she heals the Queensland Health crisis. I know it may be a little politically inconvenient for the minister, but these people deserve a voice.

An opposition member: They are real!

Mr CRISAFULLI: They are real and they are not made-up stories. They are Queenslanders who have been let down because of seven years of poor planning. They deserve a health system that is world class no matter where they live.

The maternity issues that are raging through the state are not just at the Royal Brisbane. Today the member for Currumbin asked a very direct question of the minister and the minister said she had answered that question. I have reviewed what I believe the minister's answer to be. I do not believe there is a straight answer to the question, so we will ask it again: has this practice occurred at another hospital or multiple hospitals? Clarity on that is very important. When it comes to maternity services and the failure of this government, look no further than Gladstone, where for nearly 100 days a powerhouse of this state's economy did not have any maternity services at all. They still do not know when full maternity services will return, and the pressure that is putting on Rockhampton and surrounding areas is immense. We have had babies born on the side of a road in Chinchilla and we have had the closure of wards.

Today I intend to give the government a little bit of knowledge as to their record of years gone by. Since 1998 the Labor Party has closed over 30 maternity wards in this state—over 30. Mothers deserve to have a baby where they live, not on the side of a road on the way to a major centre. Mackay has lost the accreditation to train for maternity services. Whilst I am on the subject of Mackay, in relation to the investigation the minister spoke about today she said that she is 'listening to those mums', but

they are the same voices we heard 12 months ago, the same voices whose stories we brought to this place. We were told that we were scaremongering and that we were making up stories. For 12 months that city was given a service they should not have been subjected to because the minister is out of her depth and refusing to listen.

The minister today blamed the previous government for the failings of the health system. We called for this investigation, and where there are failings in the health system every mum deserves to get justice no matter when or where they occurred. This government has been in office for nearly eight years, and for its only defence to be to cling to the record of a government that will be 10 years in the wilderness at the time of the next election shows that in its third term this government has given up. It has given up on trying to heal the Queensland Health crisis.

In Caboolture the government did not make it public knowledge that similar reviews were underway and that the same reviewer who was looking at Mackay was looking at failings in Caboolture. There were 12 investigations, and we still do not know today what they were about today. There have been dozens of PIDs, and the minister refuses to reveal what is going on with the culture at that place or if the reviewer was even told about it in the first place. When a government is no longer willing to listen, let alone answer concerns, that is when you know a government is in its dying days.

The minister avoided the issue of the DNA lab. She ignored the questions, but eventually she said we were politicking. Does that sound familiar? Every time issues are raised it is the same: deflect, distract, attack and then eventually try and blame someone else. Queensland Health is in crisis, and increasingly there is a disconnect between what the minister says publicly and what our RTI briefings tell us. The minister said that category 1A patients were being met on time: they were not. The minister said that people were not dying in the back of an ambo or on the end of ramps: they were. The minister said hospital bypass was not happening: it still is. The minister said ED waiting times had not blown out: yes, they have. The minister said elective surgery was being delivered on time: it is not.

This minister is under immense pressure. Her own colleagues tell that tale. They tell that tale in the way they hold their heads during question time and they tell that tale by what they say publicly. The Minister for Water is threatening to resign. The Chief Government Whip is under pressure and breaking ranks. Today the Premier, who had three minutes to defend her minister, took 15 seconds. She had three minutes to launch a defence of an embattled minister and she could not make 15 seconds. We have a health minister who is out of her depth and a Premier who has sailed into the accountability sunset. After nearly eight years of poor management the government must acknowledge that Queensland Health is in crisis. When this government came to office ambulance ramping was at 15 per cent. Today it is at 45 per cent, the worst in the nation. We are waiting for the latest figures, and we know the minister has them. Please show us the figures.

Tonight the federal government will hand down its budget. In the lead-up to the last election there was one comment that struck a chord with me, and that was the defiance with which this government demanded a fifty-fifty funding deal on health. I remember their comments that the former government failed Queensland because it had not committed to fifty-fifty, so tonight is the test. Let me assure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I always put Queensland ahead of the political colour in Canberra. I will stand up tomorrow and if there is fifty-fifty funding—the transport minister does not quite understand this concept—I will be the first to come in here and thank the government if it is delivered. If it is not, I look forward to the condemnation going across the political divide.

Finally, I will make this point. It might be uncomfortable for this minister if we keep asking questions, it might be uncomfortable for the government if we keep probing, it might be uncomfortable if we take the fight on behalf of mums, patients and paramedics to this floor but, until this government changes its attitude, we will continue to raise concerns, otherwise Queenslanders will just have to change this government.