



Speech By
Jennifer Howard

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

Record of Proceedings, 24 February 2022

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT

Ipswich Hospital, Health Workers

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (2.46 pm): I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge and pay tribute to the frontline health workers at Ipswich Hospital who have worked so hard over this summer during the Omicron wave. I know many of them have faced extremely long work hours, staff shortages and crippling fatigue, and I want to let them know that their dedication is appreciated by everyone. Many health workers I know are skilled and compassionate caregivers who are willing to go above and beyond in spite of the challenges they face on a daily basis.

Before Christmas I took the opportunity to drop off gift hampers to Ipswich Hospital workers and ambulance officers to show my appreciation for their service. In a week's time, I and three of my Labor colleagues—Lance McCallum, Charis Mullen and Jim Madden—will be showing our appreciation again by putting on a free coffee tab for the hospital workers. West Moreton Health and Ipswich Hospital are partnering with us to hold this special thank you day, and they should be commended for the outstanding job they have done moving swiftly and effectively to manage the Omicron wave.

For a few weeks, the pressure on that hospital was immense. At the height of the wave in January, the Ipswich Hospital repurposed five existing wards as COVID wards, non-urgent elective surgeries were postponed and admissions to the ED increased substantially. While we are over the worst of the wave now, pressure on our hospital—mostly due to high population growth in Ipswich—is ongoing and something that we recognise. We are taking steps to address this by committing \$166.9 million to expand the Ipswich Hospital—something that has been urgently needed for quite a while.

It took a Labor Palaszczuk government to deliver a funding commitment to expand our hospital. I am very pleased with how fast this expansion is progressing. When I visited the Ipswich Hospital before Christmas, I toured the newly completed 26-bed ward, delivered as part of the hospital expansion. We are now also seeing construction on the new 64-bed acute mental health unit, due to be completed late this year. We have installed a new MRI and we have received funding to expand the hospital's emergency department. To help take some of the pressure off the Ipswich Hospital, we have also committed an extra \$40 million to build a new satellite hospital in Ripley. This government's strong track record of investment in our public hospitals is clear to see—not only in Ipswich but also right across Queensland.

Further to that, the LNP cut \$1.6 billion out of the health budget in their first budget and they sacked 4,800 health workers. I cannot imagine how such a depleted workforce would have coped with the COVID wave should it have occurred during the Newman years. In contrast, this government has gone into this pandemic well prepared because of the 11,248 doctors and nurses we have added to Queensland Health's workforce since 2015. Their hard work and dedication is something we can all be proud of. Next time you are visiting a local hospital, take a moment to thank them.