




Speech By
Hon. Meaghan Scanlon

MEMBER FOR GAVEN

Record of Proceedings, 12 May 2022

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Hon. MAJ SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs) (3.42 pm): May I too place on record my appreciation for all of the incredible nurses in my community who go above and beyond to care for people. I had the opportunity last week to celebrate with them in my office. They are incredible human beings and should be thanked by everyone in this House. I also thank the Health and Environment Committee for undertaking this important inquiry.

As has been noted, the Palaszczuk government has provided an interim response to the recommendations that are applicable to us—not that you would know that by some of the comments and remarks being made by those opposite. We have done that because we have a proud track record of restoring the frontline services those opposite cut. We know that we need to continue to improve health care for all Queensland if we are going to keep up with the growth in demand that we are seeing in places, particularly like my community on the Gold Coast. We know the reality is that the health system is under pressure because of many of the values of this federal government. You do not need to take my word for it. In fact, every single health minister across the country, regardless of political persuasion, has called for urgent action on things like: providing fifty-fifty funding for our hospitals, lifting the growth cap on health funding, fixing primary care and, of course, for the federal government to do their job in fixing funding and policies around aged care and NDIS.

Yesterday on the Gold Coast alone there were 58 people sitting in hospital who really should have been getting the support they needed in their home. That is not happening because there are failures in those federal government systems. Unfortunately, this is not unusual for the Gold Coast. In February the committee heard from Ms Spence from the Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service, who noted there were 100 patients whose discharges had been delayed for various reasons, including awaiting an NDIS plan and accommodation and/or aged-care beds.

In 2018 I started a petition calling on the federal government to ensure that the aged-care sector level of staffing would give Queenslanders the dignity and care they deserve. I raised the aged-care crisis in this House multiple times, in the paper and in the community, and we doorknocked on it. At the time I was ignored by people like Angie Bell, Karen Andrews, Stuart Robert and Bert van Manen, who were responsible for the aged-care system. Then, of course, the Earle Haven debacle happened. More than 70 frail, elderly residents were left without a home after very serious failures in the aged-care system. What was really appalling to see was that in the 18 months before that happened the federal government received 22 complaints. The provider had been sanctioned three times. It is pretty hard to get a sanction. Three times they received that notice, including a report identifying the immediate and severe risk to care recipients' safety, health and wellbeing. In 2015 it met less than half of the 18 expected outcomes of home care standards.

In that case, this government had to intervene with emergency services and Queensland Health staff and step in because the aged-care system failed and let vulnerable frail people down. It is a prime example of the increasing external pressures our health system is facing because of the failures under other levels of government. I have heard so many other horrifying stories where paramedics have had to rock up to pretty awful circumstances in aged-care facilities. Frankly, those people should not have had to go to hospital, but the aged-care provider decided they did not want to spend the money to care for the person in their home. The member for Thuringowa already mentioned one of those instances from a Gold Coast paramedic.

I also want to touch on the NDIS. For the benefit of the House, I also want to declare that my brother has Down syndrome and is an NDIS recipient. When the NDIS was introduced, it gave a whole lot of families across this country—families like mine—hope. That hope has been eroded by this Liberal National government. My brother is one of the many people across this country whose funding was cut. I suspect this is likely because of things like the Sustainability Action Taskforce, which was really just a razor gang within the National Disability Insurance Agency, which told staff to slow down getting Australians with a disability on the NDIS and slow their funding.

The Queensland government provides over \$2 billion every year to this scheme, and we do that because we believe in the real impacts it has on improving the lives of people with a disability. For the opposition to suggest in their statement of reservation that we are politicising this issue, when there are thousands of families out there facing the reality of cuts to services, is ridiculous. It is pretty clear that they are only interested in backing their mates in Canberra. It is also not surprising—

(Time expired)