



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

Record of Proceedings, 23 June 2022

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (2.56 pm): I rise today with my response to the government's 2022-23 budget. I do so having the great privilege of being the opposition's shadow minister for health and ambulance services, shadow minister for medical research and shadow minister for women and as the proud member for Mudgeeraba.

We are in the midst of a Queensland health crisis. That is now a well-known and well-established fact. Patients know it, our clinicians know it and Queenslanders know it. It has been building for more than half a decade—seven years—over three terms. All that time the government's grip on Queensland's public health system has been wavering. That entire time they have been losing control. Now we have arrived at crisis point—situation critical: a health system on its knees overseen by a government incapable of managing it.

Queensland Labor and Queensland Health—it is a sad and sorry tale that can be traced back decades now. In a previous era it was plagued by a payroll system that did not pay nurses. We had a fake prince who stole millions in taxpayer cash. We had a Premier who called the whole thing a basket case and that it should be split in two, and we had ambulance ramping at 30 per cent, a level which at that time had never been seen before. Fast forward to today and the mess that was made back then is with us again, only this time the government inherited ambulance ramping at 15 per cent; it had been halved in less than three years. Today it is at 42 per cent, the highest on record in Queensland and the worst in the country.

Just like the Labor government in the first decade of this century, this Labor government is tired. It is running out of puff, it is running out of ideas and its integrity lies in tatters. It is overseeing a health system on the verge of collapse. It is a familiar story which Queenslanders know all too well.

On Tuesday we heard the Treasurer and the Premier ask Queenslanders for another seven years to sort out the health crisis. It is not just 'another seven years'; they are breaking a promise and taxing Queenslanders to try to pull themselves out of a mess. The problem is that the health crisis is not arriving in seven years time; it has arrived. It is here now. I have been talking to those on the front line of our health system—the heroes who have shown up every day through the pandemic, through the flu season and through the staff shortages to help Queenslanders. They have known for many years that this health crisis was coming.

When Queensland families think about the services that are delivered by the state government they think of health care. It is a core responsibility. It is a responsibility that for seven years and three terms this government has often absolved itself of, to the detriment of Queenslanders. Queenslanders

expect an ambulance to come when they call triple 0. They should rightly expect that. They do not expect to be told there will not be one for hours or to consider finding their own way to hospital, yet that is what is happening in Queensland today.

On this side of the House, we have consoled those mourning the loss of a loved one because the ambulance they called did not arrive in time. On this side of the House, we have looked into the eyes of those desperate for their elective surgery to fix a knee, a hip, their heart or their eyes. Nearly 60,000 Queenslanders are waiting for elective surgery today. On this side of the House, we have sat and listened to Queenslanders who have been waiting years to see a specialist. There are more than a quarter of a million people on that list right now. These Queenslanders—like the doctors, nurses, paramedics and allied health professionals who care for them—are crying out for help. They are desperate for it. They are crying out for help, despite there being record health budget after record health budget for the last eight years.

If the last eight health budgets have been so great and so record breaking, why are we in this mess? Why is Queensland's ambulance ramping rate of 42 per cent the highest on record and the highest in the nation? Why has Queensland's elective surgery waiting list nearly doubled since this government took office? Why do more than a quarter of all patients presenting at our emergency departments wait longer than the clinically recommended times? If this government and its budgets have been so fantastic for our public health system, how did we get to where we are today? They are fair questions that every Queenslanders has the right to ask, and the common denominator is this government.

As an opposition, we have consistently spoken about our view on the solutions to the Queensland health crisis. We have done it for well over a year now. I have always said that more resources are critical—I welcome any investment for our hospital system, and I will always fight for more—but I want to be clear on this point: additional investment and more resources are only one piece of the puzzle. The health crisis in Queensland is a problem today. It is not a problem to be fixed in seven years time, which is when the key facilities the government has announced will come online. Less than 10 per cent of the government's \$9 billion hospital building program will be expended this coming financial year. Nearly a third of it has not even been allocated in the forwards. They have made huge promises, but it is possible that the outcomes of those promises will not be seen until after the next decade begins. As Dr Bolton, the president of the AMAQ, put it, we needed more resources and more beds yesterday.

With a majority of the other promised beds slated for beyond two years time, where does that leave our hospitals for the remainder of this winter or the next flu season? Are we destined to see the frenzied scenes on ambulance ramps and in our emergency departments repeated year after year for the foreseeable future? Based on the announcements in this budget, I fear that this may well be the case.

The issues besieging our health system are not just born of a lack of resources; many of the problems are structural and cultural. Those issues cannot be solved with money alone. The opposition believes that clinicians must be re-empowered. To do that will not cost a cent. Frontline health staff know our hospitals best. They know the communities they serve and the health needs of those communities. They understand the intricacies and complexities which are involved in delivering care in their own local areas. Empowering them to identify and enact local solutions to local problems is a must. That is particularly the case in our rural and regional facilities, because Brisbane just does not get their patch like local clinicians do.

This government has form when it comes to stripping services out of the bush. Look at the number of birthing services closed under Labor across rural and regional Queensland. As the shadow minister for women, I believe it is totally unacceptable. It means that babies are being born on the side of the road, because when baby decides to come it is hours to the closest facility capable of birthing a child. It is inexplicable that this could be happening in Queensland in this day and age. We should be giving women in rural and regional Queensland the facilities and the support they need to birth safely; however, women in these communities and their precious babies continue to be left in these dangerous and undignified situations. It is a shameful record which this government has overseen.

More resources and empowering clinicians are things the opposition sees as critical to healing the health crisis; however, there are two further points. As an opposition we have spoken about improving triage practices and expanding training pathways for triage staff, which can also help ease blockages at the front door of our public hospital system. For many Queenslanders, arriving at the triage window is the first interaction they will have with our public hospital system, and it is critical that we get it right. Finally, the current approach to keep the performance of our health system under lock and key must also change. The sharing of health data openly and transparently must occur. It empowers patients and gives clinicians choice, it has the potential to streamline care, it provides Queenslanders with a clear picture and it can drive reform.

I will continue fighting until Queenslanders in every community have the health service they deserve. That includes mine—the best electorate in Queensland. Once again, the residents of Mudgeeraba have been left behind by Labor and I am pretty cross about it. Again, there is nothing much for Mudgeeraba. Labor loathes the Gold Coast, despite all the glitz and glamour we offer for red carpet appearances. This budget reveals what Labor really think of our community. We are nothing but a backdrop—a film set for their announcements. They do not care about the people who have chosen to live in the best place in Queensland.

I think it is important to place on the record some details of what I have been fighting for on behalf of my local community—projects that would help the hardworking people of Mudgeeraba who have again been let down by this out-of-touch, three-term government. It is lucky that we were not still holding our breath waiting for the train at Merrimac. There has been a station promised there since 2017, but there is still no timeline or details about the process. They talk a big game about public transport, but there is not much delivery. With better public transport, pressure would be eased on our roads.

Speaking of this, Labor has again ignored the infrastructure projects that my community needs to stay safe. I am glad the minister has just walked into the chamber. We need \$1.5 million to raise the Austinville causeway so that more drivers are not swept off the road in floods and communities remain connected in times of natural disasters. I have written to, talked to and met with ministers and their departments trying to explain just how important this project is, but all I get is a letter from the minister saying that it is not a priority. Tell that to the families who had to spend the night in their cars because they could not get home when the road flooded again this year.

Then there is the footpath at Springbrook. Finally, there is some funding to replace a dangerous roadside walkway but, in typical Labor fashion, it is a few metres short. The footpath reaches to either side of a vehicular causeway, so people now will be forced back onto the road to cross over the creek, which floods frequently. It literally is an accident waiting to happen. The accidents are already happening on Gooding Drive. I have been fighting to get this major intersection signalised for years, because only traffic lights can stop the accidents and help keep people safe.

Then there are the roads outside our schools. I have been fighting for the state to help council with the costs associated with providing safe drop-off zones for Mudgeeraba State School and Clover Hill State School. Again, I have written and explained, yet still we have families putting themselves at risk so they can get to school. The safety of our children should be our first priority.

Talking about safety, let's talk about the illegal hooners who are making life hell for communities in Mudgeeraba. Again let me put on the record how many times I have written, met with and talked with ministers for the past seven years. I have explained that installing CCTV cameras in Lower Beechmont, Springbrook and the Numinbah Valley will help our hardworking police hunt down and prosecute these low-lives.

There is nothing, not one brass razoo, in this budget to help keep my community safe on the roads. This tired, third-term government has also let down the children of the future in Mudgeeraba. I am thrilled the Mudgeeraba Special School will get an additional \$6 million for new classrooms, but we need so much more. I have said it before and I will say it again: we need a new state high school west of the M1. Housing developments are proceeding, homes will be going up and families will be moving in. Our local primary schools are booming, local high schools are at capacity and there is no room or capacity for future development. Our families want to stay in the area from the first day of school to the last, but they cannot because this government will not fund the future.

Again we have heard Labor talking up tourism and the environment, but we still need more to be done. Tourists travelling to the magnificent hinterland need better signage at Springbrook, they need better facilities and parking so the visitor experience is what it should be. I welcome the spending on ecotourism at Gondwana and the construction of the adventure tourism cliff climbing system at Natural Bridge, but we also need to keep the environment around our urban communities in the best possible shape. Mudgeeraba Creek used to be a thriving ecosystem hosting platypus populations. For seven years I have been fighting for this beautiful waterway to be reinvigorated as a natural haven for the residents, but for seven years we have been ignored.

The My Community Legal service has been ignored. These are the people who provide free legal service to some of our most vulnerable residents, such as families fleeing sexual and domestic violence. There is nothing in this budget to help that important community support. I want to put on record my determination to keep fighting for Mudgeeraba so the residents can have the roads, schools and education they deserve. It has taken me years of campaigning to get Worongary Road resurfaced. Trust me when I say I will keep fighting so that the residents of Mudgeeraba have the infrastructure and facilities that they need. I will not be shying away from the fight.

Mr Bailey: Why did you cut it when you were in power?

Ms BATES: I take the interjection from the minister. It was the LNP who actually fixed the causeway on Worongary Road, thank you very much.