



Speech By  
**Ros Bates**


**MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA**

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Record of Proceedings, 12 October 2022

**MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Palaszczuk Labor Government, Performance**

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (2.26 pm): I am not going to be lectured to by someone on the other side who wants to be the Minister for Health but cannot even run trains on time. It has been six weeks—didn't you get sent to the CCC? Foolish minister.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Order! Pause the clock. Resume your seat.

**Ms BATES:** Fool!

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member, I had called you to order and then you used unparliamentary language. I am going to warn you. I have called the House to order. Any commentary will come through the chair and there will be no direct exchanges across the chamber.

**Ms BATES:** It has been six weeks since this House has sat under normal circumstances. In that time—and I do not say this lightly—we have seen exposed some of the greatest failures in Queensland Health in living memory. It was revealed that some Queenslanders were waiting for hours after calling triple 0 for an ambulance, only for them to be tragically found dead on arrival. There were more than 20 of those devastating cases. Some waited nine hours.

We learned that we have a dysfunctional DNA lab, which has been rendered so inept that murderers and rapists might be walking free. We have also learnt that not only was the minister blatantly wrong when she said the QAS was meeting their targets, but she only wants health performance information released at a time that is politically convenient to her. I say to the minister: there is a stark difference between being incompetent and being underhanded and deliberately misleading. To the detriment of all Queenslanders, the minister is straddling all three of those things: incompetent, underhanded and misleading. The difference between what the minister is being told and what she says publicly is diverging and that divergence is growing each and every day. How then can the minister be trusted?

What I want to focus my contribution on today is the catastrophic failure in patient safety at the Mackay Base Hospital. There is no other way to put it; it is the greatest failure in patient safety that Queensland has seen since the nightmare that was the Jayant Patel saga in Bundaberg nearly 20 years ago. Since the damning revelations from the obstetrics and gynaecology report were released, my thoughts have been with every one of the women involved as well as their families. So, too, have my thoughts been with all those patients who have come forward in relation to the allegations of malpractice against urologist Dr Daryl Stephens. The opposition called for the investigation at Mackay Hospital to be broadened. We said that in the parliament, we said it outside this chamber and I even wrote to the minister directly about it. I wrote to the minister on 17 November 2021 and said—

It is my genuine worry that there may be broader issues at the Mackay Base Hospital.

I ask that the current review being undertaken is expanded to include other medical and surgical departments at the Mackay Base Hospital.

I table the letter.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 17 November 2021, from the member for Mudgeeraba, Ms Ros Bates MP, to the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services, Hon. Yvette D'Ath, regarding the Mackay Base Hospital [1637](#).

The fears and concerns I raised in that letter were justified. We know that now because so significant were the failings across the hospital that the minister has threatened to sack the hospital board. There has been a special adviser appointed and the entire system is being reviewed. We were not scaremongering; we were raising substantive issues that the minister failed to adequately address. So dismissive was the minister that she never even bothered to send a response to my letter. She never even replied. Is it any wonder that senior health officials were dismissive of the complaints of patients and clinicians when that is the standard the minister sets? The minister sets the tone. The minister sets the culture. When she and the Premier frivolously dismiss these allegations or call them scaremongering, they say that that dismissive behaviour is fine for others. Look where that has led us. It has had devastating consequences.

On 26 October 2021 I questioned the minister in parliament. I asked if there was a doctor at Mackay Base Hospital practising with reprimands on their registration. The minister said no. The next day, 27 October, I revealed in parliament that there was at least one doctor with reprimands on their clinical registration. Only then did the minister reveal that there were two doctors with reprimands on their registration, under questioning. We now know that one of those doctors was surgeon Daryl Stephens. The minister knew. We questioned the minister and she answered—she knew—so the minister has to tell us now what she knew.

After being questioned in parliament, did the minister ever ask about Dr Stephens's history? Did the minister ever ask about the nature of his practice in Mackay? If she did ask, she would have learned that the hospital was forced to pay compensation based on the adverse outcomes a patient suffered. Further, she likely would have learned that an investigation was underway by regulators into a missed cancer diagnosis. That is why this is on the minister. The minister knew and she did not act. The minister cannot blame anyone else this time. That is why the minister's position has become untenable.