



Speech By  
**Ros Bates**


**MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA**

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Record of Proceedings, 25 October 2022

## **MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

### **Obstetric Services**

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (2.33 pm): As a registered nurse for 40 years, I have seen the pain and the anguish of mothers who have tragically lost their unborn babies. I have been there with families when they had to come to terms with the fact that the child for whom they had hopes and dreams will not leave the hospital with them. It is a pain and an anguish like no other. It is a hurt which never leaves. So when it happens we must ensure that everything humanly possible is done to ensure the pain and the grief of those mothers and those families is acknowledged and carefully respected. Anything we can do to lessen their grief we should do. That is why 12 months ago I was so alarmed to hear that women who had miscarried or who had stillbirths were being placed in the same maternity ward as others who had given birth successfully. That practice was happening at the Royal Brisbane & Women's Hospital. Mothers who are grieving should not be subjected to that practice. At that time there was wide agreement that it should stop.

Those who have been through that grief know that it is important to allow the time and the space to grieve for the loss of their baby. It is not possible to do that in a maternity ward full of newborns and their families. Madam Deputy Speaker, you will understand my complete and utter dismay when I saw women who had suffered the tragic loss of their beautiful baby still describing their experience in Queensland public hospitals as 'torture': brave mothers at perhaps their lowest ever point mourning a life that will never be lived placed in the same wards as mothers and their new baby. We were told it was unacceptable, and it was. We were told it needed to change, and it should have. But nothing happened; no change was made. Twelve months on, it is still happening.

The health minister made a promise that that practice would come to an end, and it did not. Imagine for one moment being in the shoes of that mother or of that family who has tragically lost their baby. They should not have to walk through a ward hearing the sounds of newborn babies crying for their mother while they grieve. The health minister promised that would stop happening, and it did not. They should not have to witness other families experience their greatest day as they mourn their loss. The health minister promised that would stop, and it did not.

The minister should not make promises she cannot keep. Do not set false expectations. Do not peddle false hope. We know now that is what happened. The promise was not kept; the expectations and the hope were false. Here today we heard the health minister fail to confirm if this practice is happening at any other Queensland health facility. That is despite her one year ago saying that the practice would end at one hospital. It is unfathomable.

With the minister's credibility now shredded and her promise broken, the minister must come clean with the people of Queensland. What questions did the minister ask over the last 12 months to ensure this practice would stop? What actions did the minister take over the last 12 months to prevent this awful situation from occurring? Did the minister do neither? Why make the promise at all if the minister never intended on seeing it through? It is but another example of the minister saying one thing but doing another.

The trust of Queenslanders, her department and her colleagues is the cornerstone of ministerial accountability in our Westminster system. Today what we saw was a clear breakdown in that trust. Asked if the Premier would sack the health minister, the Premier failed to rule it out. Make no mistake, that was no mistake. The Premier is getting sick of watching the minister being embroiled in some new failure or being caught out saying one thing but doing another. It has become a daily ritual now. The Premier was asked directly if she would back her health minister. She could have stood up for three minutes and backed her in. Alas no, she stood up and then she sat down. Queenslanders know that actions speak louder than words, and the health minister knows exactly what those actions meant today.

Before our eyes the minister is losing control of Queensland Health. Before our eyes the minister's credibility has been shredded and before our eyes the minister's own colleagues are walking away from her, threatening to resign and failing to back her. Her position in cabinet is no longer tenable and Queenslanders know it.