




Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Record of Proceedings, 25 May 2022

MOTION

Central Queensland, Health Services

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (5.42 pm): When I was asked to talk on the motion I thought that this House could take some time to talk about the people in Biloela wanting a CT scan, essential services and intensive care beds. This comes from consultation with opposition teams in these communities wanting to advocate on behalf of those communities. It has been turned into a political debate. I will take the time to talk about the needs in the Central Queensland area, in particular the great areas of Bundaberg, Childers, Agnes Water and others. We need to paint the scene of an ageing population in the area. We are facing challenges in the health sector, but unless we recognise these challenges and put the 2030 plan into action for these people in regional Queensland we are in big trouble. Currently 26 per cent of the population are over 65. It will get significantly higher.

Government members interjected.

Mr BENNETT: Do I have to take all these interjections to get you people kicked out? Keep going.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Comments will come through the chair.

Mr BENNETT: It is already significantly higher than the state average of 15 per cent. Twenty-six per cent of our population earn less than \$33,000 per year compared to 17 per cent for the rest of Queensland. It is no secret we are also suffering a severe shortage of GPs. I acknowledge the strain this is putting on the Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service.

Ms Richards interjected.

Mr BENNETT: I will take the interjection from the member for Redlands who is obviously going to go on all day. You look after your own hospital, I will look after mine and we can get on with the job.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Comments will come through the chair and, member for Redlands, you will cease your interjections.

Ms Boyd interjected.

Mr BENNETT: I have been here 10 years and I am very proud to be here.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Pine Rivers, cease your interjections.

Mr BENNETT: I will continue to advocate for Queensland Health and for the people of Bundaberg who are clearly not getting their fair share under the current arrangements. My first question is how are current health professionals expected to keep up with the ever-increasing pressures when we have not dealt with the shortage of health professionals? There are issues at the federal level. I have no doubt that there is a district workforce shortage, issues with Medicare provider numbers—all these things—but we could have debated it tonight and got a sensible outcome and agreed that health services could be better.

There are serious issues around the future of doctors at Childers Hospital. I put on record that we have been talking to the Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service about the principal health officer leaving. This has caused a lot of angst in my community. They are operating with two locums, and we all know how expensive that is. We need a principal health officer, two junior doctors, a medical superintendent and allied health support staff. I put on record that the Childers community deserves better. We need an urgent review of the model currently in place where the medical superintendent is expected to run the private practice. Agnes Water and 1770 do not currently have a hospital or any other health service infrastructure. The closest is 125 kilometres away. Currently there are 2.5 full-time equivalent GPs to support a population of 6,000. This expands by another 5,000 during peak holiday periods. For about 20 years there has been very little change in the level of service delivery. Local Discovery Coast residents access both the Wide Bay health service and the Central Queensland health service. We are calling for action.

Ms Richards interjected.

Mr BENNETT: I will take the interjection from the member for Redlands again. Again I am advocating for my community and I suggest she gets on the speaking list and talks about the tragedy at Redlands.

Ms Richards interjected.

Mr BENNETT: I will take the interjection from the member for Redlands again. All I am advocating for is my region. I guess the member for Redlands could be on the speaking list if it is her desire to be heard and obnoxious all night. The issue of access further complicates the process. Often there are referrals that say 'client is out of catchment'.

Ms Richards interjected.

Mr BENNETT: I will take the interjection from the member for Redlands interjecting over my comments about—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. The manner in which you are conducting yourself, and have been through much of this speech, is dangerously close to reflecting on the chair. I will maintain order in this chamber and I am doing that. If you have any concerns about my performance there are ways that you can deal with that. For now I would suggest you continue your speech.

Mr BENNETT: Can I ask for clarification? I am not allowed to take interjections from members who are yelling at me across the chamber? I am asking a question.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, I do not take questions from members. I have given you advice. You have the call. If you do not want to continue your speech you can sit down.

Mr BENNETT: The Rosedale community currently operates without an ambulance station, leaving the residents with a one and a half hour wait for an ambulance. This is not good enough. We have heard several stories about people waiting in severe pain or worse in the Rosedale community. The community is subject to significant road trauma on a road that is clearly in much need of upgrades.

I will conclude with the promised level 5 Bundaberg Hospital. It is not easy to turn up to that community and continue to talk about the promise made in 2020. At a recent community forum Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service said they are going to add services gradually until we get to level 5 services. It is a complete cop-out. The community were lied to. That is the way that the Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service continues to operate. I will go on record, as I have before, and say that I do not believe that the Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service chair is the right person for the job. It is time for her to consider her role in providing health services to the people of Wide Bay.