




Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Record of Proceedings, 17 August 2022

MOTION

Hervey Bay, Youth Crime

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (5.29 pm): I will spend my time debating this motion talking about the issue of police being taken away to deal with the failing health system. This is a big issue right across the Wide Bay as well as in Hervey Bay.

The House must recognise that the member for Hervey Bay does share our concerns about the Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service. We remember when he backed the unanimous vote of no confidence in the management of the Wide Bay HHS. I think it is important that we get this on the record because in his contribution this evening the member for Hervey Bay was praising the Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service but, more importantly, was not acknowledging the issues that he has previously acknowledged and backed.

We cannot continue to take police resources off the front line to deal with the failing health system. This is a huge issue that is not being addressed in the Wide Bay. More importantly, we have heard about issues in the ICU at the Hervey Bay Hospital—the leaked letters. In the Wide Bay region, 26 per cent of people are over 65 and a lot of those are in Hervey Bay. They have a lot to be fearful of and a lot to be disappointed about in their representation with issues not being raised. Those issues are about not only health and law and order but also many other things.

I want to go on record this evening because the issues with culture and service delivery in the Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service are issues that we should be disturbed by. I have been called out in this place for talking about the issues in our hospitals. I want to make it clear that we now have an independent inquiry into the mismanagement of medications at the Hervey Bay Hospital and across the Wide Bay. I take this time to remind members that on 22, 23 and 24 of this month the clinical review team will finally be there to have an independent inquiry and people can make their submissions anonymously.

I think it is important that whistleblowers finally get their just deserts because we want whistleblowers not to be scared, not to be bullied and not to have the issues that they want to raise jeopardised by fear of reprisal. We have to acknowledge the bravery of the staff, the patients and their advocates—it is absolutely admirable. It takes great strength to stand up to this government, particularly to government members, and, more importantly, to have their voices heard. The number of whistleblowers in this space has to be acknowledged. We want to make sure that they feel comfortable to reach out and share their experiences with investigators. At the end of this though not only should we acknowledge them but it is important to remember that when we asked about this issue we now know that one nurse has been sacked and we know that another nurse has been disciplined. More importantly—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Member, I fear that you are straying a long way from either the motion as presented or the amendment. I ask you to come back to the motion as presented.

Mr BENNETT: The failing health service is part of the motion. I am talking about the failing health service. I will continue.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I do not wish to argue with you. I believe you are straying from the motion. I ask you to come back.

Mr BENNETT: I want to acknowledge them and their information because we need to make sure that in Hervey Bay and across the Wide Bay we do start to make cultural and practical changes—to make sure that issues with the Police Service, youth crime and the failing health service are addressed. I am looking forward to meeting with more people who come into my office to tell me their stories, to talk to me about the issues and to take the time to talk about the lack of representation in Hervey Bay. It is important that we continue to turn a spotlight on this very important seat. More importantly, it is part of the Wide Bay. To have our neighbouring electorate completely underrepresented by the member is really disturbing.

I do acknowledge going forward that, if we are going to deal with things like youth crime, the Police Service and the failing health service, we have to have a whole-of-region approach. That means that members around the Wide Bay who represent the government need to have the courage to stand up to their government and call out the poor service delivery, or lack thereof, in the Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service. The hardworking police and staff in the hospitals all have compassion for their day-to-day work and they need to have decent members to represent them. I do not know how many times we have tried to get the issue of youth crime in particular on the agenda in the region only to have zero representation and support from the local member.

I find it really disappointing that the motion was amended straight up. We should have the courage in this place to debate important motions that represent our communities.

Mr Tantari: It's a rubbish motion.

Mr BENNETT: I take the interjection from the member for Hervey Bay. That proves one thing: you do not have to have a long neck to be a goose! I also want to take the time to reflect on other issues within the Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. I ask you to withdraw that unparliamentary language.

Mr BENNETT: I withdraw. I have more if you want them.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, we don't.

Mr BENNETT: I have 23 seconds, so we will see how we go. I will get back to the motion. I commend the member for Burdekin for putting this issue on the agenda. It is important that we stand up for the Wide Bay communities. It is important that the opposition continues to shine a light on the issues surrounding us—that is, the lack of representation and the poor performance of the member for Hervey Bay.