



Speech By  
**Hon. Yvette D'Ath**


**MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE**

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Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2022

## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

### **Health Workforce; Elective Surgery**

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (9.57 am): I am pleased to report to the parliament that a total of 795 new junior doctors joined the front line in January. I recently had the pleasure of meeting some of them at Redcliffe Hospital. Junior doctors have been recruited across 20 different Queensland Health hospitals—from the Far North right down to the Gold Coast. Of these junior doctors, I am very pleased to say that 56 were Queensland Rural General interns. This rural generalist program has been so successful; in fact, the rest of the nation looks to Queensland as far as this program in terms of how to attract more regional doctors into our rural and remote communities.

On top of this, our health workforce was bolstered further this month as we welcomed the next intake of graduate nurses into Queensland's health system. So far in 2022, more than 1,070 graduate nurses have been on-boarded in Queensland Health hospitals throughout the state. These graduate nurses and midwives will play an important part in ensuring Queensland Health continues to prioritise health care for our patients and provide an excellent experience for patients and their families throughout their care. I also want to acknowledge that before many of those junior doctors started in our hospitals and before our student nurses graduated they were helping in our vaccination clinics and our testing clinics. We had so many of them. It was wonderful to see all of these junior doctors coming out and helping in these clinics across the state.

Finally, I am pleased to advise the House of another boost this government has made to frontline resources to assist patients in need of an ambulance. We committed to funding 535 additional ambulance officers in this term of government, and we are well on the way to meeting this target. The Queensland Ambulance Service Education Centre has always been a hive of activity over recent months, with 345 new officers trained this financial year alone. The additional positions will enhance roster coverage and allow the QAS to remain agile and flexible in its ongoing pandemic response.

I want to welcome our enthusiastic new graduate nurses, junior doctors and ambulance officers who have stepped up at a time when Queenslanders need them most. This intake of new graduates reflects the ongoing commitment of our government to support our clinical workforce following its significant decline during the period between 2012 and early 2015. Since we came to office in 2015, we have added: 2,688 doctors, an increase of over 34 per cent; 9,744 nurses, an increase of over 35 per cent; and 5,093 allied health professionals, an increase of over 53 per cent. We have also added an additional 923 ambulance officers. More is to come as part of our four-year commitment from 2020 to add another 9,475 clinical professionals to the front line of our health system. As our record \$22.2 billion investment in our last budget demonstrates, our government continues to prioritise the delivery of quality health services to Queenslanders.

I can also inform the House that, in addition to the announcement we made yesterday around lifting further restrictions including mask wearing from 4 March, from next Monday, 28 February, we will have a statewide, staged restart of elective surgery in Queensland. While elective surgery has already

started in some hospital and health services, this restart will mean that all Queensland health services will be once again performing elective surgery, initially focusing on the most urgent matters. The fact that we can restart elective surgery is a testament to the hard work of our health staff and all Queenslanders in battling against this Omicron wave, and signals our transition to the next phase of the pandemic.