




Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Federal Budget, Health

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (9.58 am): Tonight is an opportunity for the Morrison government to give us our fair share of health funding for Queensland. Every jurisdiction in Australia is reporting the same pressures on their hospitals from rising emergency and planned care demand. This exponential increase in demand has been exacerbated by the pressures associated with COVID-19, but they predate the pandemic. These pressures have been intensified by a sustained underinvestment by the Commonwealth in all facets of our healthcare system since 2013, whether it be primary care, hospital funding or investment in our mental health services.

The measure of success for tonight's budget is whether it addresses this entrenched underinvestment. It is long past time that the long-agreed and long-delayed commitment to deliver a fifty-fifty split on health activity was honoured. When he stands up tonight, that commitment to our national health system should be Josh Frydenberg's top priority.

I am also calling on the Commonwealth government to lift its arbitrary imposition of a 6.5 per cent cap on its funding for health activity. There needs to be a genuine strategy to ensure that aged and disabled Queenslanders are getting access to accommodation rather than living in a hospital bed. This is not a partisan issue. Every single state and territory health minister has backed in this call. It is supported by the AMA, which insists that we do this to protect our universal public health system.

While an increase in funding to our hospital system is a prerequisite for this budget, it is not the only measure required. The chronic underinvestment in primary care by the coalition since 2013 has been the genesis of the unrelenting demand on our public health system. The inability of Australians to get a bulk-billing GP leads them straight to the doors of our public hospitals. The barriers to doctors becoming and remaining GPs have been commented on by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and the AMA.

Tonight's budget should map out a plan to reverse the years of neglect shown by the coalition government. It could start by finalising and funding the Primary Health Care 10 Year Plan, along with an attraction and retention strategy for young GPs. The decision of the Morrison government to cut funding of the national partnership agreement on dental services by 30 per cent since 2015-16 has had a significant adverse impact on the ability of Queenslanders to access the dental care they need. Tonight's budget must include a commitment to reverse that cut, restore funding to the delivery of dental care and return to a longer term funding model beyond the yearly extensions currently in place.

A substantial proportion of the increase in demand in our emergency departments has been due to the increasing presentation of patients with mental health conditions. It is imperative that tonight's budget includes further investment in this vital area of health service delivery. When he gets to his feet tonight, the federal Treasurer has the opportunity to recognise the challenges we face and deliver Queensland's fair share of health funding, even though it has taken so many years. Anything less will be a betrayal to Queenslanders.