




Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

Record of Proceedings, 30 March 2022

MOTION

Federal Budget

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (4.33 pm): I am so glad that I got to follow the member for Mudgeeraba. She has just gone through what she says is a list of the problems in the health system but thinks that the federal government should not put any more money in. Isn't that interesting? There are all these problems, but no—the Morrison government should not put any money in because the states are responsible for hospitals, except that we have a national partnership agreement. It was the Abbott government that walked away from the fifty-fifty funding. It was the Turnbull government that arbitrarily put in the 6.5 per cent cap. It was the Morrison government that refused to fix those cuts from previous Liberal prime ministers.

Ms Bates interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order! Member for Mudgeeraba, you have just given your speech.

Mrs D'ATH: What does that show us? It does not matter which Liberal prime minister is in: they are all going to rip money out of the health system. That is the reality of it.

Members do not need to take our word for it. Health stakeholders have been voicing their opinions. The member for Mudgeeraba would certainly not put anything out criticising the health budget unless her association, NPAQ—the anti-vaxxers—put something out which I suspect they never would. The national president of the Pharmacy Guild said—

... the government had squandered an opportunity to help millions of Australians better access critical medicines, relieving hip pocket pressures for working families and reducing the burden of preventable disease on our hospitals and emergency services.

Families are being forced to choose between medicines and immediate needs like food or fuel. This is bad news for their health and wellbeing and will translate into a higher burden on hospitals and emergency healthcare.

The Australian Medical Association said—

The Budget re-state the Commonwealth will only meet 45% cent of usual hospital costs, and that the 6.5% cap on hospital funding growth will remain.

Yet hospital Emergency Departments are full, ambulances are ramping, and the AMA estimates the waiting list for essential (elective) surgery has blown out by a further 190,000 surgeries with the COVID-19 elective surgery pauses, on top of the existing waiting lists.

The AMA were ignored. The Lung Foundation said—

As the peak lung health organisation, Lung Foundation Australia expresses a deep disappointment that the government has stalled progress by not funding a national screening program.

There is undeniable evidence for the screening program that has already had initial investment into scoping, but this lack of funding means progress will stall, and thousands of lives will be lost as a result.

The Australian Council of Social Service said—

The budget ends the Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment in June, which will hurt lowest-paid workers without access to sick leave. And while all workers, regardless of income, will get a tax deduction for their Rapid Antigen Tests, the free Rapid Antigen Tests for concession card holders will end, despite them being in greatest need of support.

The Australian Dental Association said—

Another Federal Budget that is light on for oral health. Once again we see an extension to the National Partnership Agreement for adult dental services—another Band-Aid to a system that is broken.

The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation said—

NACCHO is tiring of singular announcements in Aboriginal health while the health gap fails to close. Structural reform is required and substantial funding investment. The last three big-spending budgets were the Government's opportunity to address this. They have failed to act.

The CEO Pat Turner said, 'As long as this \$4.4 billion gap remains and as long as there are funding gaps elsewhere—in particular, in housing—we cannot expect the unconscionable health gap to close. This Budget is an opportunity lost. NACCHO calls upon the Government to close the funding gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation said that this budget 'let down our critical health and aged care workforce' by not acting on aged-care pay or minimum staffing levels. The Grattan Institute described the 2022-23 budget as a 'standstill year for health and aged care'.

The Leader of the Opposition says, 'This is just cheap politics.' What about these key health stakeholders? Why don't their opinions count? Why has the Morrison government ignored their calls on an ongoing basis to lift funding in these spaces?

The LNP in Queensland might think that the federal government has nothing to do with health, but Queenslanders know that the federal government has a responsibility to fund health and to put funding into aged care and into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services.