



Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

Record of Proceedings, 12 May 2022

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (3.12 pm): We expect the sort of debate that we just heard from the member for Mudgeeraba, who was once again criticising a completely factually correct report and we know why: because it is shining a light on the Morrison government's failings. It is a pleasure to rise to make a contribution in relation to this report. It is a very important report that fundamentally goes to the demand pressures on our public health system. You cannot talk about addressing patient off-stretcher times, planned care and bed capacity without talking about primary and allied health care, aged care, disability services, the Medicare system and the failings of the Morrison government.

The Palaszczuk government has continued to invest in our health system, we will continue to provide record budgets for the health system and we will continue to invest in our front line. However, we also have to recognise that the Commonwealth government has an important role to play as it is responsible for primary care, allied care, the NDIS and aged care. It is a fact that the Morrison government has failed miserably to appropriately fund and regulate those sectors. The committee's report presents undeniable evidence of that and unequivocally shows that our hospitals and emergency departments are picking up the slack left by the Morrison government's complete abrogation of responsibility.

Those opposite do not like to hear that because it is an awkward thing for them to have to listen to. They want to be able to denigrate Queensland's health system and this government. They want to continue to be ignorant—deliberately, I would say—about what is happening across the country. However, it is hard to do that if they acknowledge the complete failure of their federal colleagues to fund the areas of health care, aged care and disability care for which they are solely responsible.

This morning we saw a shameful attempt by the opposition to claim that we are fudging patient off-stretcher time figures. As I said in the House this morning, there has been no change to the definition of 'patient off-stretcher time' and there will be no change to the definition of 'patient off-stretcher time'. The rubbish that they are once again peddling outside this House is about cheap politics instead of key issues such as the underfunding of primary and allied health care.

It is a fact that our emergency departments are providing low-acuity care to more people because those people cannot get in to see a bulk-billing GP. It is a fact that there are not enough GPs, particularly in rural, regional and suburban areas. It is a fact, particularly in the regions, that there is a lack of after-hours GP options, which means that many people have to attend an emergency department instead of a GP. It is a fact that people who cannot see a GP are suffering adverse health outcomes that require complex and lengthy hospital stays because they could not access the simple preventive care they are entitled to.

It is a fact that fewer people are taking up private health insurance and that many of those who do take it up pay for minimalist policies that provide low coverage, which means people with private health insurance still end up in the public hospital system and in our emergency rooms. It is a fact that vulnerable elderly people in residential aged care have disgracefully low access to GPs, nurses and allied health professionals, leading to poorer health outcomes and many aged-care facilities having to send their residents to hospital for basic health needs. It is a fact that the residential aged-care and disability-care markets have utterly failed, leading to two hospitals worth of Queenslanders being stuck in public hospitals because they have nowhere else to go.

At the federal level, this decade-old conservative government has left primary health, aged care and the NDIS in complete disarray. The state health system has been left to pick up the pieces to ensure that people are receiving health care and that elderly Queenslanders and those with disability are not thrown out on the street as they have nowhere else to go. Every year Queensland is spending billions of dollars to pick up the slack from a federal government that simply does not care. Yesterday we heard about Margaret. It was the Palaszczuk government and our state health system that made sure that she did not languish for four months in a hospital bed but could go home.

Those opposite, who come from the same political party, have the gall to come into this place and attack our public health system while ignoring the failure of their mates in Canberra. The next federal government, regardless of who it is, must come to the table with the Queensland government and other jurisdictions to forge a better approach to healthcare delivery in this country and to deliver on the recommendations in this report. Last week Scott Morrison said that if the Commonwealth increased their funding then the states would reduce their funding. What a load of rubbish! That is absolute rubbish! We continue to put in record budgets. We just want our fair share. It is about time we got it.