




Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Ambulance Service; Health System

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (9.57 am): The scarcity of labour has hit every part of our economy, but nowhere is this more important than in the health sector. There is now more competition than ever to recruit and retain health workers so that we can service the ever-growing hospital demand that all jurisdictions are seeing. For Queensland to remain the prime destination for health workers across the world, I can advise the House that on 27 September Queensland Health will be hosting a health workforce summit. This summit will gather together more than 250 pre-eminent health stakeholders to develop a plan on how we can continue to deliver secure and fulfilling jobs to Queensland's world-class health professionals, and I am looking forward to attending.

Queensland is well positioned to lead this conversation, with a proven track record of backing and recruiting our staff, with over 15,000 brought on since 2015. Most recently, I announced that we would be employing an additional 770 nursing graduates a year for the next two years, on top of our existing annual intake, as well as an additional 100 clinical facilitators each year for the next two years.

In addition, this week the Queensland Ambulance Service will release its next five-year strategy. The objectives, directions and actions in the strategy will reinforce QAS's mission to deliver timely, quality and appropriate patient focused ambulance services to all Queenslanders. Building on this work, QAS is working on delivering its new 2022-23 operational plan that will build closer collaboration with health partners across planning, operations, data sharing and service design, embed the QAS clinical hub as part of the broader virtual care agenda, and develop a new workforce strategy with a focus on inclusion, culture and capability.

By backing our frontline workers, we have been able to prepare for the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the reality is that there are enormous pressures facing our health system. Pressure is evident in documents recently released in relation to significant incident reviews undertaken by the Queensland Ambulance Service. The information highlights the immense pressures on our QAS staff to categorise patient priority and dispatch vehicles and the difficulties associated with meeting increasingly complex ambulance patient demand in the midst of a COVID-19 wave that pushed our health system to the limit.

Without commentating on individual matters due to privacy, some of the cases identified are heartbreaking. Unfortunately, due to the nature of cases QAS respond to or the nature of their illness or injuries, people sometimes pass away prior to receiving care, during care or after the discharge of care from the QAS. The findings of significant incident reviews are made with the benefit of hindsight and ample time to analyse the complex, multifactorial issues. This does not replicate the operational decision-making environment confronting our QAS staff in their daily duties. Of course there will always be opportunities to improve, but I want to pay tribute to the work of our QAS staff and acknowledge the care they deliver to Queenslanders each and every day.

Working closely with my department, we are continuing to strive to improve system performance and expand our bed base through the Queensland health plan, a \$9.785 billion plan over six years, bringing online an additional 2,509 beds. This is in addition to working closely with the federal government on issues such as long-stay aged-care and NDIS patients. I would urge caution to those peddling false hope with simplistic slogans. There are complex, multifactorial pressures with significant work underway across the country to incrementally improve our universal health system. I commend the health workforce for striving every day to deliver for Queenslanders.