




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Record of Proceedings, 22 February 2023

MOTION: QUEENSLAND HEALTH

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (5.24 pm): Welcome back! We have plenty of energy on that side, and that is the best the LNP can do? It has flatlined! There is zero pulse! Wheel it through the emergency department! Come on, member for Moggill: issue a recognition of life extinct! The party has gone!

I am proud to represent Thuringowa and the electorate of Townsville and our health workers in our HHS. I will fight for it every day. Why? Because I understand it. I have worked in health for 30 years. The LNP just does not get it. Let us get to the Leader of the Opposition—the bloke who cut and run from Townsville, but, then again, he was not much of a loss. When he was the local member he endorsed the sacking of 398 health workers, including 156 nurses, in our hospital. What were you thinking? What was the defence from the Newman government? The sackings were a matter for the local health boards. Our ambulance station staff were sacked and he was the minister, the—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Through the chair.

Mr HARPER: The former member for Mundingburra was the minister sitting in the Newman cabinet and made that decision to sack health workers.

Mr Millar interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Gregory, you can leave the chamber for one hour.

Mr HARPER: That is one down.

Whereupon the honourable member for Gregory withdrew from the chamber at 5.26 pm.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Thuringowa, when I pause the clock you should resume your seat and not participate in the debate until I call you.

Mr HARPER: We will never forget what the LNP did to our hospital. That is in stark contrast to what our Labor government is doing for our HHS. We are putting more nurses back on and more paramedics. We are building 143 more beds right now. There is the Kirwan Health Campus and \$40 million in my electorate looking after our health staff. Since 2015 we have employed 183 more doctors, 295 more nurses and midwives, and 75 more allied health professionals. Those opposite only know one thing. The LNP only knows one thing—cut, sack and sell. We are restoring. We have built up our health capacity because we have an ageing and growing population.

It is important to recognise that our health investments are paying dividends. Let us do a bit of a comparison between the performance data released today and the 2014-15 Newman budget. In 2014-15 the Townsville HHS saw 78 per cent of ED patients within the recommended time frame. Today's quarterly data shows that the HHS saw 83 per cent—an improvement in an ageing and growing population. In 2014 the Townsville HHS median ED wait time when the Leader of the Opposition was the minister was 14 minutes. Today's performance is 11 minutes, again with an ageing and growing

population. We are doing better than the former LNP. All it did was sack, cut and sell our assets. The LNP is addicted to tearing down our health system and our health workers because it wants to create a perception of crisis to justify its radical decisions to sack health workers. I still have not heard an apology from the shadow minister for health who called our regional health workers 'duds'. This is a great opportunity to apologise to our health workers. Apologise! Too often people are either deferring care or heading straight to the ED because they cannot access a GP.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister and shadow minister, you will cease your quarrelling across the chamber.

Mr HARPER: As I just said, people are either deferring care or heading straight to the ED because they cannot access a GP, particularly one who bulk bills. That is why I am such a big supporter of the North Queensland Community Pharmacy Scope of Practice Pilot. Does the LNP support that pilot? We have not heard a thing. It is a commonsense measure that will increase awareness of vaccines and provide treatments for common conditions. Women should not have to pay money for a GP appointment just to access the contraceptive pill. Our pharmacy pilot will fix that. I have one question: will the LNP and the Leader of the Opposition back it in? The silence is deafening. Again we are backing our health workers; those opposite sack our health workers.