



Speech By  
**Aaron Harper**


**MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA**

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Record of Proceedings, 13 September 2023

**MOTION**

**Health Workers**

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (4.38 pm): It is very interesting to follow the contribution by the member for Moggill. We all remember individual doctor contracts. Remember the Pineapple Hotel? We all remember those. We know how much you value health staff in this state!

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Direct your comments through the chair, please, member.

**Mr HARPER:** I completely agree with the minister's motion and I would ask the member for Burnett to own the mistake. Stand up in this House and apologise. Do not follow the member for Mudgeeraba, who has never apologised for calling regional health workers 'duds'. The member has the opportunity to do that. I say this, Mr Deputy Speaker Kelly, and I know you will understand: there is not one person on the LNP side who would understand managing a trauma patient for an hour and handing over to a medical team in the emergency department—not one—or a paediatric resus or an asthma case or a cardiac case.

As a former paramedic I did that for 30 years. I will not have anyone in this place challenge what I did for 30 years. I am gunning for the member for Broadwater. Let me put on the record that he was the member for Mundingburra in the Newman years. At that time I happened to be a state councillor in the ambulance union and we did two EBAs, one under the Bligh government and one under the Newman government of which the Leader of the Opposition was part of. We got far better entitlements under the Bligh government. When the LNP came in they wanted to strip away our entitlements: strip away meal overtime, strip away afternoon penalties, strip away weekend penalties. They wanted to break the back of health workers in our state.

As the acting OIC of the Townsville station in 2014, we lost our entire customer service staff who did first aid training and our baby capsule fitter. He was crying in front of me when he lost his job. The hypocrisy of the Leader of the Opposition to say that they care when they sacked 4,400 health workers in this state. Four hundred were in Townsville. When you are dealing with people who are crying in front of you for losing their jobs I would shake my head too, Leader of the Opposition. He has never apologised for sacking 4,400 health workers in our state and trying to rip entitlements away from health workers who are the hardest working, most dedicated health professionals we have in this state. What we get from the front bench and now the backbench is absolutely a disgrace. Regional health workers have never had an apology from the shadow health minister for calling them duds. Own it and apologise.

I say to the member for Burnett that I am absolutely livid when I hear that they are trying to break the back of health workers in this state. Shame on the lot of you. Shame on the LNP. The record shows they sacked 4,400. How shameful. Our government has employed more nurses, doctors, paramedics and allied health workers in this state. We have undone the damage. I have never heard an apology from any of those opposite for the sackings. They have no idea how personal it gets when you have staff crying in front of you when they lose their jobs. The Leader of the Opposition sits there laughing. It is absolute hypocrisy. They should apologise.

**Mr POWELL:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Those comments directed to the Leader of the Opposition have no relevance whatsoever to the current debate.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): I will take some advice in relation to that. I do not believe there is a valid point of order in relation to relevance. However, member, earlier in your speech you made some comments that I deem to be unparliamentary and I would ask you to withdraw those comments.

**Mr HARPER:** I withdraw. The LNP in this state has a shameful history of sacking health workers—you know that better than I do, Mr Deputy Speaker—right across the board and we have never had an apology. They do not back nurse-patient ratios. I remember 100 nurses in the gallery at one o'clock in the morning when those opposite opposed nurse-patient ratios. They sacked nurses. That is the legacy of the LNP. I will never let my community of Thuringowa forget what the LNP did to health workers in Townsville. I will remind them every single day, member for Broadwater. Lift your head up; own it. Get your shadow ministers to apologise, get the member for Burnett to withdraw his comments and apologise for the absolute insult to every single health worker in this state. We will back our health workers. We would never sack our health workers.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Before I call the next speaker, I would like to remind all members—and I have had to do this on previous occasions and it applies to all members of the temporary speaker panel and myself—that when we are in this chair we are impartial and we are not to be drawn into or referred to in debates. At times during adjournments members will refer to nice things about our electorate, and that is acceptable, but we are not to be drawn into debates when we are sitting in this chair.