



Speech By  
**Barry O'Rourke**


**MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON**

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Record of Proceedings, 13 September 2023

**MOTION**

**Health Workers**

 **Mr O'ROURKE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (4.49 pm): I rise to speak in support of our motion. Queensland frontline doctors, nurses, midwives and all of our health staff dedicate their lives to supporting us. That is why I am committed to supporting them and to ensuring that Queensland has the health workers we need. We all know that Queensland's health system, like every health system around the world, is facing recruitment challenges. Our government is continuing to work hard to address those challenges, including by offering up to \$70,000 for interstate and overseas healthcare workers to move to Queensland and funding obstetrics training for GPs in regional Queensland. While we will continue this work, let us not forget that it is the Palaszczuk government that has grown our health workforce, not cut it.

My son Harry is one of the many new nurses in Central Queensland. He works for the Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service. We know that there is too much at stake for Queenslanders to risk the LNP. Our government has a strong track record of delivering for Queenslanders in the areas that matter most to them such as health, education and building the infrastructure that our growing state needs. Since we were elected, we have employed almost 19,000 additional healthcare workers. We have opened more than 1,700 new hospital beds, with more than 3,000 on the way across three new hospitals and 11 hospital expansions. We are delivering seven satellite hospitals to take pressure off our busy emergency departments. We want people to have access to world-class services regardless of what they earn and where they live.

However, we know that those opposite do not share our views. After all, they were the ones who sacked 4,400 healthcare workers, including 1,800 nurses and midwives. They failed to plan or build a single new hospital while in government. In Central Queensland, in my electorate of Rockhampton, they cut 197 health staff when they were last in power. They sent the box man around to clean out the desks. It was unbelievable. The LNP's plans and legacies do nothing but put pressure on our EDs and more pressure on our hardworking staff.

I acknowledge and thank the Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service staff. Central Queensland hospitals had 37,595 patients come through their emergency departments in the June quarter. Patients were prioritised and category 1 patients, being the sickest, were seen within two minutes of arrival. In the June quarter the average wait time across all five categories was just 16 minutes.

Even in opposition the LNP continues to criticise the hardworking health staff. We do not call them duds. We do not attack their entitlements. We do not vote against nurse-to-patient ratios. We are absolutely committed to investing in our hospitals.

In Rocky we have announced a \$92 million mental health unit refurbishment and expansion, delivering 32 mental health beds. We are investing in local mental health services, unlike those opposite who had a shocking record in mental health, including closing the Barrett centre and the suicides that took place as a result of that. We are serious about tackling mental health, which is why we implemented the mental health levy—a levy that those opposite opposed.

I cannot believe that the LNP would go to these lengths. Healthcare workers are the people who support our constituents and our local businesses. They are great people. All those opposite want to do is cut their entitlements. They work hard each and every day and those opposite do not care. They want to go in and sack them. Those people have mortgages and so on, but those opposite have no respect for what they do for our communities.