



Speech By  
**Brittany Lauga**


**MEMBER FOR KEPPEL**

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## **MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

### **Central Queensland, Health Services**

 **Ms LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (2.41 pm): Every Queenslanders deserves access to world-class health care no matter where they live, but Central Queenslanders were shocked last Friday when Mandalay Medical Centre in Rockhampton announced the centre is closing in December. Mandalay have serviced our local community for many years, and their decision to close will have an impact. I thank the doctors, nurses and staff for their work looking after our community for so many years. I am concerned about the closure of Mandalay Medical Centre because we need more GPs in our community, not fewer.

Since Mandalay's announcement, I have raised the community's concern with the Minister for Health and have attempted a number of times to contact Mandalay's management to no avail. The Queensland government is aware of the potential impact that the decision to close the Mandalay Medical Centre will have. The Queensland government has started working closely with the federal government and the Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service to ensure the hospital is resourced appropriately to meet the community's health needs. I am advised the Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service is prepared to manage any increase in demand and is also working with local general practices to provide timely care for patients.

The previous federal government completely underfunded Medicare and the decade-long underinvestment in primary care has made it harder for Queenslanders to see a GP, especially bulk-billing GPs. I am particularly disappointed to see the LNP member for Capricornia attempt to play politics with this closure, given that she sat by as a member of the federal government for eight years and did absolutely nothing to increase bulk-billing doctors in Central Queensland. We saw bulk-billing sink to historic lows in Central Queensland. This was an issue I petitioned the member for Capricornia about, but what did she do? She did absolutely nothing.

I am pleased that the federal Labor government has increased bulk-billing incentives in this year's budget. It is a great start but there is more to do. The combination of Medicare indexation—the first from this financial year of 3.6 per cent—plus the federal Strengthening Medicare grants that came through in July, plus the tripling of the bulk-billing from November is genuinely a shot in the arm for general practice. Federal Labor's increase in the bulk-billing incentives for doctors to continue or restart bulk-billing concession card holders, pension card holders and children is welcome news to locals in my community. Over the past eight years we have seen a significant decline in bulk-billing rates as a result of the neglect of the federal LNP government. Let us not forget that the Leader of the Opposition, Peter Dutton, wanted to get rid of bulk-billing altogether. Federal Labor's investment will certainly help stem the flow of bulk-billing back to general practice right across the country.

**Mrs Gerber** interjected.

**Ms LAUGA:** The alternative prime minister wanted to scrap bulk-billing rates altogether. I wonder if the member for Currumbin had any opinion about the proposal by her federal leader to scrap bulk-billing altogether, which would have had a devastating impact on general practice right across the country. I know that people in my community would be absolutely devastated if the federal government was to scrap bulk-billing altogether. We need more bulk-billing and more incentives for bulk-billing, not fewer—as the member for Currumbin is arguing here.

Our regional and rural hospitals continue to do an excellent job providing health care to the people across the state, often in difficult and challenging circumstances. The establishment of the Rockhampton urgent care clinic, being delivered by the state and federal governments, will play a vital role for our community. The urgent care clinic will offer treatment for non-life-threatening conditions, a significant proportion of which may otherwise end up seeking care in Queensland emergency departments. Services will be bulk-billed and the clinics will be open for extended hours every day of the week.

I am pleased to report that, at the request of the health minister, the director-general, Michael Walsh, will be travelling to Rockhampton to engage with local stakeholders and work through what potential solutions are available to ensure care can continue to be provided to patients from the Mandalay Medical Centre. I am working to be with the director-general when he visits. A letter has also been sent to the federal Minister for Health requesting a senior official from his department attend the meetings. I will always stand up and fight for better health care for Central Queenslanders. It is disappointing that the Mandalay Medical Centre have announced that they are closing in December, but the federal government, the state director-general for health, the Minister for Health and I are all looking at ways in which we can move forward to provide better healthcare outcomes for Central Queenslanders.