




Speech By
Michael Healy

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Record of Proceedings, 13 September 2023

MOTION

Health Workers

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (4.28 pm): I rise to support the motion, which will not come as a surprise to anybody. I begin by taking the liberty of suggesting that the member for Burnett possibly needs to spend less time online and more time speaking to frontline workers. I also make a personal observation. I have never seen the current leader of the LNP so animated. There are no greater examples that the truth does hurt. This continues the behaviour we are seeing all too frequently from those opposite, and the people of Queensland will see more of it as we get closer to next year's election. We hear from the member for Burnett that he wants to break the back of unrealistic employee entitlements.

The health workers in my community do not forget when the LNP cut 430 frontline health positions: 306 health jobs were lost in the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service, including 48 nurses and midwives; some 96 people lost their jobs in the Cape York health service, including 22 nurses and midwife positions; and 37 health jobs were lost from the Torres Strait, including 13 nurses and midwives. That is the legacy that you have in Cairns and its surrounds, and these are the same people—

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

Mr HEALY: These are the same people that the member for Mudgeeraba called 'duds'. Seriously! What sort of respect can people have out there? We can see that the intentions are slowly starting to creep out. Regional workers are the backbone of communities like mine, and that is why I am proud to be part of a government that has delivered 1,264 extra frontline health staff to Cairns since coming to government, including 288 doctors, a 64 per cent increase; 720 nurses and midwives, a 36.9 per cent increase; 192 health professionals, a 37 per cent increase; and 64 ambulance operatives, a 20 per cent increase, and this is only the beginning.

Our government is doing the work to attract and retain our regional health workforce. The Palaszczuk government workforce attraction scheme is already working, and who would not want to move to Queensland? We are making it a lot easier. Our economy is booming. We are in a far better state and enviable position than New South Wales and Victoria. Health workers interstate and overseas are already moving to our part of the world. Nurses can be eligible for up to \$20,000 if they come and work for Queensland Health. If you are a nurse, a midwife, an allied health professional, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health worker, a dentist, an oral health practitioner or even a scientific officer, we want you. They will get \$10,000 when they start and a further \$10,000 once they have completed 12 months. Doctors who make the decision to take up a job in regional and remote areas will be paid up to an additional \$70,000.

Let us compare that to what those opposite invested in the Cairns health workforce when they were in power—nothing, not one cent. If all of that does not want to make someone move here, we have the best working conditions and we have the best entitlements across the nation. As I said earlier,

people are moving to Queensland because of it. It was not enough to sack 430 frontline workers from Far North Queensland; they then cut \$120 million from community health programs in the north where they are essential. That is absolutely despicable. That is a drop in the ocean from the \$1.6 billion they cut from the health budget statewide.

The member for Burnett is only reinforcing what the member for Chatsworth has already talked about. He has identified billions of dollars to take out of our economy. The member for Burnett is now identifying benefits and taking them from workers. Nothing has changed with this mob across the aisle here. They are exactly the same. The simple fact of the matter is that the LNP is not only a risk to health but a risk to everything that we stand for. Our economy is doing well. It will threaten that. Our businesses are doing well. We recovered so well from a major pandemic, yet we see nothing from the other side. Those opposite will not give any indication. The people of Queensland are seeing little inklings with a little post here and a little statement there. That is where you are coming from and that is what you are about because that is in your DNA. You know no better.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Through the chair, please.

Mr HEALY: We are about building economies and building futures, not pulling them down for the economic benefit of offshore companies.