



Speech By  
**Ros Bates**

**MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA**

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Record of Proceedings, 22 February 2023

**MOTION: QUEENSLAND HEALTH**

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (4.57 pm): I move—

That this House:

1. notes the continuing crisis within Queensland Health as evidenced by:
  - (a) the failure of the government to resolve the emergency in Queensland's regional and rural maternity services;
  - (b) the \$110 million cost blowout in Labor's satellite hospital program and the failure to deliver these facilities on time;
  - (c) Labor's failure to permanently discard its GP tax proposal which will cost Queenslanders more to visit their local doctor;
  - (d) Labor's failure to negotiate a 50:50 health funding arrangement with the federal government;
2. and calls on the Labor government to—
  - (a) provide a clear timeline on when the Gladstone, Chinchilla and Biloela maternity units will reopen at full capacity and rule out the closure or bypass of any other services and ensure the Maternal Fetal Medicine unit at Townsville Hospital is staffed and resourced so mothers and babies are not at risk;
  - (b) advise Queenslanders what services will be available at each of the seven satellite hospitals and when they will be open and operating;
  - (c) rule out imposing any additional taxes or costs on patients visiting their local doctor; and
  - (d) reduce ambulance ramping times and surgery waiting lists and the wait to see a specialist.

2023—it is a new year, but the same health crisis in Queensland. It is that simple, and it will not change for as long as those opposite occupy those benches. In particular, it will not change for as long as the member for Redcliffe occupies the chair as the Minister for Health—the worst health minister Queensland has seen since—well, the Deputy Premier. Let me tell you, that is no mean feat given his shambolic time in the seat, and that says a lot about just how utterly hopeless those opposite have been in managing the health portfolio in the past eight years.

Seeing as though it has been some time, I thought I would remind honourable members about how horrifically poor the last year was when it came to matters of the health portfolio. Those opposite presided over the greatest failure in patient safety since the Jayant Patel saga at the Mackay Base Hospital. It uncovered dozens and dozens of women who were permanently, physically and psychologically harmed, some to the point where they will never have children again, a tragedy in the truest sense of the word.

Clinicians were sacked, the board was sacked and the chief executive left but the health minister remained. When we warned the government about failures in the Mackay Base Hospital in 2021 we were told that we were scaremongering by—of all people—the Premier. That is right, the Premier. She is so checked out, so tin-eared and now so arrogant that she has dismissed these patients and whistleblower concerns as scaremongering. How wrong was the Premier?

Then there was the horrid mess in the Forensic and Scientific Services laboratory. In the face of insurmountable evidence and a growing chorus of whistleblowers, the minister said the LNP was playing pure politics. What an absolute clanger that one was! It turns out that rapists and murderers could be walking free because of the lab's failures. Those failures were on top of record ambulance ramping, surging waiting lists for surgery and specialist appointments, and EDs bursting at the seams. It is hard to imagine it could get any worse, but it has. There are consequences for that and Queenslanders are living it.

Since this House last sat the lack of maternity services in rural and regional Queensland has hit crisis point. Under those opposite, maternity services have closed their doors in Chinchilla, Cooktown, Biloela and Gladstone. It has been nearly 230 days since Gladstone was put on bypass—a maternity ward which services nearly 60,000 people has been closed for nearly 230 days. It is scarcely believable and yet it has happened. There has been a domino effect in Central Queensland. The pressure on Rockhampton as a result of the Gladstone closure has reportedly led to more obstetricians in Rocky deciding to move on. Now rumours abound that the Innisfail Hospital could be the next regional maternity service to shut up shop.

Is it any wonder our state's obstetricians are fed up when the minister bizarrely talked down the role they played last year? Today we have seen coverage of yet another leaked report, this time from the Townsville Hospital where whistleblowers have lifted the lid on mothers with high-risk pregnancies being at risk due to chronic understaffing. The report says it in black and white: the hospital's maternal foetal medicine workforce, comprised of only two specialists, is so overwhelmed that it has led to 'documented delays in the care of high-risk pregnant women with risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes and potential medico-legal consequences'. That is what the clinical reviewer said. It is dire. Year after year, crisis after crisis it continues.

Do honourable members remember the flagship health announcement at the last election from those opposite, the Satellite Hospitals Program? Extracted through a question on notice we have uncovered that that program is now running woefully late and horrifically over budget. It was promised that they would all be opened by May 2023. Some will not open until 2024—when exactly we do not know. They are \$110 million over budget and likely to be more. Leaked audio revealed what a Queensland Health staff member thought about the program—a ruse. 'Not hospitals', the audio said. Never a truer word was spoken.

The member for Pumicestone and the Minister for Health did not even hold a press conference with a gold shovel. No-one in their Facebook echo chamber believes they are hospitals either. The AMAQ has said these facilities are hospitals by name only and not nature. There are no beds, no emergency departments and no theatres. They are not hospitals. Those opposite have been so badly embarrassed they only invited themselves to their own unveilings. It is a joke. When will it end? It will end when the government changes.