




Speech By
Ros Bates

MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

Record of Proceedings, 14 March 2023

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Ambulance Service, Dispatch System Outage

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (2.27 pm): Seeing as though no member opposite is willing to do it in an open, honest and transparent fashion, I want to address the outage of the Queensland ambulance dispatch system last Friday and over the weekend. It should irk every Queenslanders that the health minister and the Premier did not have the gall to stand up and tell Queenslanders that our ambulance dispatch system went into meltdown. Why? Because they were hoping it would never surface. They were hoping the greater Queensland public would never know. That is the playbook of this government: hide it; do not mention it; do not take questions; hope that Queenslanders will never know and it disappears. That is their modus operandi. I say this to the Premier and the health minister: Queenslanders know. They know because they lived it. Our hardworking QAS dispatchers and paramedics lived it. People looking for help after calling triple 0 lived it. This morning the minister said that on Friday last week calls were being taken and dispatches were occurring. Well, Minister, you might want to check those facts.

Mr SPEAKER: Through the chair, please.

Ms BATES: Sorry. Take Lyn and Lionel Morris from Cranley in Toowoomba. On Friday night Lyn had to phone triple 0 for Lionel following complications after his recent bowel surgery. The operator who took the call tried to connect Lyn to the Queensland Ambulance Service on several occasions. The call was never picked up. The Morrisses had to take matters into their own hands and phone their daughter to transport them to hospital. It was nearly two hours later—let me repeat that: two hours later—that Lyn got a call back asking if she had tried calling triple 0. As Lionel said, what if it had been a heart attack, what would have happened then? Those opposite might want to bury their heads in the sand to this scenario, but it could be a reality. I hope and I pray that every Queenslanders who called during the mass outage got the care that they needed.

I am less hopeful that we will ever know the true extent of the problem given this government's aversion to being up-front and honest with Queenslanders. Here is a case in point: the health minister and the Premier herself had the opportunity to tell Queenslanders about the issues plaguing the triple 0 dispatch system when they addressed the media over the weekend. They could have done it yesterday afternoon when they addressed the media. They both could have done it this morning in their ministerial statements. Did that happen? Did the people ultimately responsible for our health system choose to be open and transparent with the Queensland public? Did they explain that the ability for the Queensland Ambulance Service to dispatch and track their crews in a safe and timely fashion was compromised? Did they explain that people calling triple 0 were waiting with significant delays to have their calls answered? Did they explain that some triple 0 calls were not being answered at all? Of course they did not.

Those opposite have walked so far away from openness and transparency that they would not know what it looked like anymore. Accountability, integrity, openness and transparency are totally and utterly absent in the way that those opposite choose to govern. They could not even bring themselves to publicly thank our incredible Queensland ambulance staff for the way they dealt with the outage. Whistleblowers have told us that it was left to a phone, a radio and a whiteboard. Those whistleblowers described it as 'operational chaos which caused significant delays'. They were dumbfounded that nobody was willing to stand up to talk about what was unfolding and the potential risks to the public. Alas, those opposite could not bring themselves to talk about it either because, like I said earlier, that is their playbook.

We have a health minister who is so inept, incompetent and out of her depth that all she is able to do is lurch from crisis to crisis. Her only tangible action is hoping to sweep one or two of them under the rug. The minister is all but a political passenger now after suffering irreparable political damage. We know it, her cabinet colleagues know it, her backbench knows it and, boy oh boy, the Queensland public knows it. She is responsible for nothing and accountable to nobody. If she were, the Premier would have sacked her months ago.

What does that say about the Premier? The Premier is checked out, arrogant and detached from the reality that Queenslanders live every day. The Premier does not have a clue about how bad the problems are inside Queensland Health and Queensland patients and frontline health staff are paying the price for that. The Premier does—

(Time expired)