




Speech By
Ros Bates

MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

Record of Proceedings, 11 May 2023

MOTION

Far North Queensland, Service Delivery

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (4.12 pm): I rise to support the motion moved by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Queensland Health is in crisis, and don't the people of Far North Queensland know it? There are lengthy delays for surgery, obscene periods of time to see a specialist and, tragically, fatal waits for an ambulance. Nearly 4,000 people are waiting for their surgery, more than 19,000 are waiting to see a specialist and one in four patients are ramped when they arrive at the Cairns Hospital. That is what is happening across Far North Queensland. You do not need to travel too far to see that with your own eyes. Who could forget the images of ambulance after ambulance stacked on the ramp at the Cairns Hospital, just down the road from where we are today? It was so choked full of ramped vehicles that ambulances spilled out onto the road and the footpath. They were disturbing scenes. Eight years ago, many of the staff at that hospital would not have even known what ramping was.

Recently we heard reports of a tragic case where an individual passed away after suffering from a heart attack in Port Douglas. Despite urgent calls to triple 0, it was a 51-minute wait before the ambulance arrived, and by then it was too late. Why did it take that long? The review of that case obtained by the opposition showed that there were 'nil resources in the area'. I repeat: 'nil resources in the area'. That is why: there were no resources. Who does resource our health system? It is those opposite, the Palaszczuk government. On that occasion those opposite failed, with tragic consequences. They failed that person and their family, and our thoughts are with them for their loss.

Where have the members representing this region been while all this has been occurring? We heard barely a word from the members for Cairns, Cook and Barron River about the struggling health system in the region. Not one of them is game enough to call out the failures of the woefully inept minister and the mess she is presiding over.

I am not sure if the member for Cook knows, but the Cooktown Hospital has been on maternity bypass for over a year. The mothers in that community have been forced to travel hours from home to have their babies. It is a disgrace. I am not sure if the member for Cook even knows it is happening. I have not heard her talk about it once. Way to have the backs of the mothers in Cooktown!

What about the honourable member for Cairns—His Worship over there? Where has he been? Is he backing the workers at the Cairns Hospital, in particular the mental health units? Of course he is not. He would not even know about these problems, because public hospitals are not a local government responsibility, are they, member for Cairns? The member is not worried about trivial state government matters. No, he is too busy lining up his campaign to be the mayor. The problems plaguing the hospital will be a distant memory once he ups and leaves.

Seriously, though, the report obtained by the opposition from the Cairns Hospital Mental Health Unit is absolutely damning. The staff there are scared to speak up because of retribution under this government. They are fearful, and it is written in black and white in that report. It is a disgrace. Nobody should go to work fearful of speaking up and speaking out—that is what is happening in that unit. It is unconscionable.

The report also revealed a culture of blame—and, boy oh boy, doesn't that sound familiar? We all know where that culture of blame started. It started at the top. It started under the Premier and this health minister. They blame patients; they blame staff; they blame anyone. They would blame the stray cat out the front if it meant they could get away with it. That is how they work: blame, blame, blame.

It is the same for the members for Cairns, Barron River and Cook. They never accept responsibility. They are never accountable. They never own up to the crisis. Every Queenslanders in the Far North lives with the consequences of that and the consequences of the Queensland health crisis. I say to those members: it is time to stand up, to listen, to say 'enough' and to actually do something to try to fix the mess. They should go and knock on the health minister's door and tell her that her time is up.