




Speech By  
**Ros Bates**

**MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA**

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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE  
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (5.55 pm): I rise today with my response to the government's 2023-24 budget. And so it is that one financial year of the chaotic and crisis-prone Palaszczuk government draws to its close and another is about to begin. I am on my feet today as shadow minister for health and ambulance services, shadow minister for medical research and shadow minister for women and as the proud member for Mudgeeraba.

I will start my contribution focused squarely on matters relating to the health portfolio. Queenslanders live the ups and downs of our public health system. They rely on it and they need it—whether it is an appointment for their child to see a specialist, whether it is a surgery to fix a grandparent's ailing knee or whether it is a call to triple 0 during an emergency in what could be a life-or-death situation. Queenslanders rely on our public health system. Because of the total chaos and the crisis of those opposite in how they govern our state, our public health system is now in a state of chaos and crisis as well.

Those opposite might not like hearing it but Queensland Health is in crisis. The last minister for health could not acknowledge that fact, and I am not sure if the current minister ever will. If she will not, then she had better get used to hearing it and I will tell this House why. The patients waiting on ramps and in overflowing emergency departments know it. The staff, my colleagues, working triple and double shifts scrambling to find a bed for a sick or injured Queenslanders know it. And the public at large know it. They see it and they read about it. They hear about it from their friends and family who have experienced it. They know the Queensland Health crisis is real. There are not many Queenslanders out there now who do not know someone who has waited years for an appointment for a specialist or sat for hours to be seen in an emergency department. That is a fact.

It lays bare the extent of the crisis. That is no reflection on our incredible health staff who are fronting up every single day. The patient care they deliver is exceptional under the most trying of circumstances. They are being slammed, they are being smashed—every single day. The fact our health system is in the dire situation it is is no way a reflection on them. It is a reflection on someone though; it is a reflection on those opposite—a chaotic, crisis-prone government which is three terms and nearly a decade into its tenure; a government which has failed to properly plan, resource and run our health system. No record health budget will stop that rot, the chaos or the crisis because those things are all set in stone now.

In fact it was a record, record, record health budget last year as well, if I am to quote the Premier. Look at what that record health budget got us. Those opposite can bleat and bleat and bleat about a record health budget all they like, but no amount of bleating about a record health budget will change the Palaszczuk government's record on delivering health care.

When I rose to address last year's budget, I remarked that ambulance ramping here in Queensland was the worst in the nation at 42 per cent. Despite that record health budget last year, guess what? Ambulance ramping in Queensland is still the worst in the nation—only now it is worse, at 43 per cent. In fact, so bad was ramping last year that paramedics and their patients waited a combined 147,000 hours on ambulance ramps. Record ramping from the record health budget—that is their record on health.

When I rose to address last year's budget, I remarked that there were 250,000 Queenslanders waiting to see a specialist. Despite that record health budget last year, guess what? It has risen by 30,000 people to over 280,000 Queenslanders. That is their record on health.

When I rose to address last year's budget, I spoke about the nearly 60,000 people waiting for elective surgery. At the time around one in five patients would wait longer than clinically recommended for their surgery. Now it is nearly one in four. That is their record on health. Those are the cold, hard numbers behind their record health budgets, both this year and last.

It is why the LNP has put our solutions on the table to help the health crisis: real-time data monitoring of our hospitals, better resources, improving and strengthening triaging practices and putting doctors and nurses back in charge. We bolstered those commitments today. We have committed to ensuring that a real-time data platform will be delivered within the first 100 days of our government. That is because we value transparency and accountability. We have said we will deliver a contemporary health workforce plan if elected. As we rightly pointed out earlier, it is one thing to promise new hospitals, it is another thing to staff them.

I also touched on something else in my address last year. It is an issue which spans both the health portfolio and the women's portfolio of which I proudly have shadow ministerial carriage. This issue, of course, is maternity services here in Queensland. I said last year how it was inexplicable that mothers in Queensland were faced with the prospect of roadside births after maternity services in their towns were shut. Did the situation improve last year with the record health budget? Just weeks after that budget was handed down, the Gladstone maternity ward went on bypass. A region of over 60,000 people without a maternity ward—it beggars belief. For 339 days that ward was on bypass, even with that record health budget. How this situation was ever allowed to occur in the first place is nothing short of a disgrace. When the history of the Palaszczuk government is written, the saga of Gladstone's maternity services bypass will go down as one of its darkest chapters.

However, it is not only Gladstone where this has happened. Since coming to office, birthing services in Chinchilla, in Biloela and in Cooktown have also closed their doors. It was with its own great fanfare that the government announced \$42 million in this budget for maternity services. There was just one problem: there were no details—and I mean zero details—about when Biloela, Chinchilla and Cooktown maternity services would reopen. What about Weipa? It was meant to be opened years ago. The Gladstone bypass might be one of the darkest chapters of this Palaszczuk government. It would be but one chapter in an entire book about the Palaszczuk government's failures to manage our state's maternity services.

To those opposite who have the temerity to talk about women's issues like it is something they own, I have some news. If they want to talk about women's issues, a good place to start would be allowing women to birth in the towns where they were born, where they have grown up and where they live and work. This government who crows about being on the forefront for women has continued to fail them in multiple and significant ways.

Moving on from the maternity crisis, we had the forensic lab disaster and the denial of this government that anything was wrong, disregarding the critical nature of the lab, particularly for female victims, or just being completely ignorant to its significance. We have had the failures of the state's response to domestic, family and sexual violence against women laid bare through the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce, yet there is no urgency for the government to get moving on the recommendations. It is unsurprising then that we continue to see Queensland women left behind the rest of the country on the path to equality. We have the second widest pay gap in the country. This government has had every chance to genuinely impact the lives of women for the better, but all we have had is more talk.

I want to address the comments made in this House by the Minister for Health this week, the comments where she referred to me as a fake nurse in fake scrubs. I have trained and practised as a clinician. I assume that is only something that the Minister for Health can dream of. When I talk about health care as part of the budget, I do it through the lens of someone who has delivered patient care. There are people on both sides of this chamber with this perspective and experience; the Minister for Health is not one of them.

Just like other registered nurses across Queensland, I have held the hands of patients as they passed. Just like other registered nurses across Queensland, I have comforted those receiving a life-changing diagnosis. Just like other registered nurses across Queensland, I have scrubbed up to walk into theatre where a patient's life is on the line. When we talk about delivering health care as part of this budget that is the actual end result. That is what it funds. The Minister for Health will never understand those things. She will never understand what that feels like. There is nothing fake about being a registered nurse. It is a protected title under Ahpra and one that I am qualified to hold.

To my colleagues, every educated nurse out there—practising, educating or running a hospital—I say this: there is nothing fake about the nursing you do or have done. In the minister's pathetic and detestable attempt to verbalise me, she has insulted every registered nurse in Queensland. The morale amongst nursing staff in Queensland Health is at rock bottom, record health budget or not, and the comments from the minister calling nurses who might be in education or administrative roles fake will do untold damage to the collective spirits of the nursing profession across this state. Only the minister herself can explain her bizarre, hurtful rant. Those comments will haunt her throughout her time as the minister, however long or short that is.

In yet another display of her arrogance and ignorance, the chauffeurs that she referred to on my ride-along were all senior operations officers with the QAS—senior paramedics, not chauffeurs—or does the minister think that they are fake paramedics? The only reason I was not in the back of an ambulance was because her government have refused to allow me to be in the back of an ambulance even though student nurses, student doctors, student paramedics and even the media do ride-alongs in the trucks. At least Steven Miles and Cameron Dick let me get in the back of an ambulance.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Walker): Pause the clock. The Treasurer has a title.

**Ms BATES:** Sorry, the Deputy Premier and Treasurer when they were the health ministers. Mudgeeraba has once again been forgotten by this tired third-term Labor government as key community projects continue to go unfunded. Labor has an addiction to announcements, for projects that are never delivered. The Palaszczuk government has left Mudgeeraba behind.

I have been pleading with them to fund the raising of the Austinville Causeway before someone is killed when the road floods. I am tired of raising it, and I am sure those opposite are tired of hearing about it, too, but it does not diminish its importance. The causeway is great imagery for those opposite but not important enough to fund. When they put out their 'If it's flooded, forget it.' photos, where do you think the photo is from? It is the Austinville Causeway. We need \$1.5 million to raise the causeway so more drivers are not swept off the roads in floods and communities remain connected in times of natural disasters. I have written, talked to, met with ministers and their departments trying to explain just how important this project is, but it remains at the bottom of the priority list.

Then there is the long-touted Merrimac train station, first announced in 2017 and reannounced every year since. It has not even broken ground. In classic Labor fashion, Merrimac train station, which was announced along with two other stations at Pimpama and Hope Island, at a cost of \$120 million, is now edging closer to a \$500 million project. Another blowout and not a train in sight.

Our roads continue to be neglected, we have seen next to no money at all for schools in Mudgeeraba, and what has this government done to fix the housing and cost-of-living crisis impacting my electorate? We continue to be neglected here on the Gold Coast, and it is just not good enough.

We have another budget and another list of recycled projects being reannounced: the reannouncement of upgrades to Nerang-Murwillumbah Road which has been happening for two years; the reannouncement of the Merrimac train station, first announced in 2017; the reannouncement of the Lower Beechmont community facility, announced in last year's budget and announced again in this year's budget; and the reannouncement of the Springbrook National Park visitor facilities which was completed two years ago.

The only positives we can take from this budget is \$387,500 to help in expanding Swell Festival, an 11-day sculptural exhibition around Hinze Dam as part of the Tourism Experience Development Fund. Thank you, minister! We will see the government match the federal government for disaster recovery funding to repair Gold Coast-Springbrook Road. Robina Hospital will also see very long overdue funding to the tune of \$10 million for the replacement of the mobile duress system and refurbishing the transit lounge in the acute care unit. That is the absolute least the doctors, nurses and frontline staff there deserve. What about all the other resources they desperately need? What about the fact that Robina Hospital staff cannot go to work and park their car without fear of copping a hefty fine because the parking facilities are inadequate?

Let's talk about the illegal hooners who are making a mockery of this government's weak laws and punishments. Again let me put on record how I have written, met with and talked to the minister and his department for the past eight years. I have explained that installing CCTV cameras in Lower

Beechmont, Springbrook and the Numinbah Valley would help our hardworking police hunt down and prosecute these criminals. But nothing. Our police and our community have been let down again. This government could not even include the Gold Coast as part of their recently announced program to target dangerous driving. Police had to break up a group of around 100 cars in Robina as part of a hooning operation in May, but that was not enough to warrant any funding support.

I was pleased to see, though, that the Gilston State School will receive \$600,000 to refurbish block amenities, but we need much more. I have said it until I am blue in the face—we need a new state high school west of the M1. Local high schools are reaching capacity and there is no room or capacity for future development unless it is up. Are families expected to leave the area? No, they want their children to get a consistent education.

While this government remains at the helm, Mudgeeraba will continue to be forgotten. My community deserves better and Queensland deserves better. I will continue to fly the flag for Mudgeeraba and fight to ensure the people there get the support they deserve.