



Speech By
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Record of Proceedings, 22 August 2023


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Health and Environment Committee, Report

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (4.50 pm): Well, here we go again—another year, another budget estimates. We have a new Labor health minister but the same problems plaguing the Labor government's health system. The Queensland health crisis deepens, and either those occupying the government benches choose to bury their heads in the sand or they genuinely have no idea how serious the problems are.

There is a lot to unpack about the committee's hearing but, to kick things off, one of the biggest takeaways of the day was the revelation that ambulance ramping in Queensland is 45 per cent—the highest ramping in the nation, ramping at a level that is uncharted. If there were a chief symptom of this government being terminal, it is the level of ambulance ramping across Queensland's hospitals—inherited at 15 per cent, doubled before COVID and now it has tripled to 45 per cent.

That is a sad indictment on a government that no longer listens, that no longer acts with integrity and that baulks at any hint of scrutiny and accountability. That is no more evident anywhere else than in those opposite's management of our public health system. It goes without saying that Queensland has world-class doctors, nurses, paramedics and allied health professionals. They are exceptional, but they are being horribly let down by a government that no longer listens to them.

The committee's hearing brought that very fact to the fore. It is not just our incredible health staff whom the Premier and her minister do not listen to; it is Queensland patients as well, and not just those who languish on ambulance ramps. There are now nearly 60,000 Queenslanders waiting for elective surgery across the state—a number which has nearly doubled since the Palaszczuk government took office. Behind these numbers are real people, with real experiences, living in pain or living through an accident or urgent medical episode. That fact now seems to be totally lost on the Palaszczuk government.

The hearing featured the health minister's launch of a new website, which unravelled after only a few hours. Of course, the number of hospital beds at each facility was initially omitted. It was only after questioning from the opposition that this oversight was discovered. The bed numbers were later updated but with huge discrepancies compared to previous figures. In each instance there were fewer beds. What the uploaded figures actually represented is unknown, but the oversight casts serious and legitimate doubt on the actual capacity of Queensland hospitals given the huge differences compared to previous versions of the website.

The embarrassing ordeal for the minister which played out across the day goes far deeper than incorrect numbers online; it goes directly to the principle of ministerial oversight. In health care it is the little things that matter. It is attention to detail. It is checks and balances. It is careful and meticulous preparation which ensure quality patient care and a safe and effective health system. Every clinician across this state will tell you those things are absolutely vital in the delivery of health care. The minister's botched website, revealed on the day, shows that she lacks these critical qualities. It is only the announcement in her mind that matters. The great clinicians of this state will not cop that from the person leading the system.

The minister's unwillingness to provide an honest answer to how many part 9 health service investigations have occurred across Queensland was a deeply troubling revelation to come from the hearing. These are the most serious investigations—like those at Mackay Hospital last year. How can the minister herself not know how many of these investigations are currently underway or have been previously started? Is it not concerning enough? Is it not a worry? What if there is a trend or a similar theme? I do not know what is worse: the minister not knowing how many or where these investigations are, as she claims, or the minister knowing but choosing to keep it hidden. Either way it is a disgrace and an affront to clinical oversight, transparency and accountability in the health system.

The Palaszczuk government might have a new health minister and a new website, but the same deep-seated problems continue to plague the portfolio. The opposition will continue its relentless pursuit in holding the government to account on its failures in managing the health system. Queensland's hardworking clinicians and patients deserve better than what they are getting from a tired and broken government, mired in chaos and crisis.