




Speech By
Ros Bates

MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

Record of Proceedings, 14 November 2023

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Health System, Workforce

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (2.26 pm): We had here in the House this morning one of the more bizarre displays I have seen by the health minister so far. So hopelessly desperate to impress her colleagues and so wilfully ready to undermine the Premier, the health minister launched into a wild tirade after being questioned about health frontline staff having their hours wound back on the Sunshine Coast. The minister frothed about hypocrites and bleated about a government 10 years gone. The only problem is that we are not talking about the actions of a government a decade gone; we are talking about the actions of this government, we are talking about the actions of Queensland Health under this minister and we are talking about now—and that was clearly lost on the minister.

The changes being proposed across the Sunshine Coast University and Nambour hospitals will result in frontline health staff who are manning the wards in these facilities having their hours slashed. Those staff are scared; they are frightened; they are fearful for what their future holds. I want to quote from the documents obtained by the opposition out of the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service. They state—

It is anticipated that the organisational change within the administration and Nambour hospital will directly impact upon 21.60 FTE positions.

The government documents go on to say—

Realigning the current workforce resources in some instances will cause changes to current work arrangements.

It is proposed that FTE will differ to what is currently allocated, in some instances a reduction of FTE.

The nurses on the wards are apparently livid with these changes. With their frontline ward clerks working fewer hours, it will mean that they have to pick up the slack. It leaves our already overstretched nurses with an even larger workload. It is absolute madness when Queensland Health is in crisis. It beggars belief.

The Sunshine Coast is not the only place where this is happening. The opposition has also obtained documents from the Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service which show plans had been drawn up to reduce nursing staff at the Gold Coast University Hospital ED. In fact, it would lead to an 'approximate reduction of 15 FTE direct care nursing workforce'. It would effectively reduce the nursing staff in the GCUH ED—the busiest ED in the nation—to pre-pandemic levels. It is barely believable. The nursing staff at GCUH are beyond furious, and that contract was supposed to start today.

On one hand, the minister walks around telling anything that moves about the increases in presentations to emergency departments, and on the other hand here is the minister's department wanting to wind back nursing levels at an emergency department which is already bursting at the seams. It absolutely wreaks of a minister who is totally clueless as to what is going on in our health system beyond the media opportunities she is lining up the next day.

I say this to the minister today: get across your brief. Rule it out, and not just for now but for good. Rule out the number of nursing staff at the Gold Coast University Hospital emergency department being cut by 15. Rule out the Gold Coast University Hospital emergency department ever being forced to cut its nursing staff to pre-pandemic levels—ever. Minister, while you are at it, rule out the potentially 20 frontline hospital administration staff having their hours cut across the Sunshine Coast University and Nambour hospitals. Rule out adding to the workload of nurses across the Sunshine Coast by taking them away from patient care and loading them up with administration work.

The minister should start focusing on the job she has now, not the one she wants. Her lack of attention to the detail is deepening the crisis in Queensland Health: ramping at 43 per cent—the worst ramping in the nation; elective surgery waitlists growing to nearly 60,000; and the number of patients spending 24 hours in EDs surging by close to 400 per cent since this government came to office. This is a system in crisis, Minister!

The minister's unsurpassed eagerness to gloss over how deep the problems are in our health system tell Queenslanders all they need to know about the minister's move. The minister is divorced from reality and obsessed with self-promotion. Minister, leadership is about acknowledging the realities head-on, being open, honest and transparent, including to the member for Nicklin over there. It is not about papering over the issues to try to make things look better than they are, saying, 'Look over here, not over there. Shiny bauble over here.' Queenslanders will not cop that nonsense. They know the reality of the Queensland Health crisis because they are living it every single day under the Palaszczuk Labor government.