




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Health System

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women) (10.01 am): We know that more and more people are coming to access the world-class health care offered at our Queensland hospitals. Despite a global health workforce shortage our health workers are working incredibly hard, and we know that our plans are paying off. In the July-September period we treated 38,251 patients from the elective surgery waitlist. That is an all-time record—the highest number of elective surgeries performed in Queensland’s history. This mammoth effort also means that we have reduced elective surgery long waits by 40 per cent—that is around 2,800 Queenslanders who have received the care they need—and we have delivered 185,000 specialist outpatient appointments, which is a 12 per cent increase compared to the same time last year.

The data also shows that the system continues to operate under enormous pressure. Our emergency departments saw over 575,000 patients—that is almost 20,000 more than the same time last year. The people we are seeing, unfortunately, are sicker, with a huge 8.6 per cent increase in category 1 and 2 presentations. In addition, we now have 877 long-stay patients in our hospital beds. That is almost Caboolture Hospital times three. Through no fault of their own, these patients are waiting for discharge—at a cost to our hospitals of \$1.7 million.

Despite this increasing pressure, our amazing frontline health workers are ensuring our emergency departments continue to perform well, with 100 per cent of the most serious patients seen immediately and the median wait time dropping to 15 minutes—four minutes faster than it was under those opposite. This fantastic progress is thanks to the hard work of our frontline staff and our plans, like our \$764 million Putting Patients First plan and our \$224 million plan to do even more elective surgeries. I am confident that the \$200 million I announced to develop strategies to move long-stay patients out of hospitals will help relieve pressure on the system.

The Palaszczuk government recognises that all Queenslanders are facing additional cost-of-living pressures which is why the continued provision of free, universally accessible public health care is so important. We are committed to expanding the avenues available to Queenslanders to access free health care closer to home, and that includes our new satellite hospitals, which have seen so many thousands of Queenslanders since they opened, with the Tugun Satellite Hospital opened on Sunday.

Another example of our commitment to relieving cost-of-living pressures facing Queenslanders is through our Spectacle Supply Scheme. This is a scheme which provides prescription glasses to eligible Queenslanders absolutely free of charge. Since 2018 we have provided free glasses to more than 300,000 Queenslanders who need them, providing much needed cost relief to Queenslanders under financial pressure. Whether it is our free satellite hospitals, our free Spectacle Supply Scheme or our Queensland Ambulance Service—which is the only ambulance service on the mainland of Australia that is free—the Palaszczuk government will always fight for universally accessible, free public health care.