




Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Federal Labor Government

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (3.20 pm): I am very pleased to follow the member for Toowoomba South. I am more than happy to talk about the federal government and contrast the previous federal government, the Morrison government, or the Abbott government or the Turnbull government with the Albanese government. Let's have a look at these two. I was astounded that the member for Toowoomba South stood here and started talking about access to GPs. Seriously, we had 10 years under a Liberal National government at a federal level which did nothing to support GPs or the Medicare system. Why? Because the Liberals do not like the Medicare system; we know that. It was Labor who brought in the Medicare system.

Mr Healy interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order! Member for Cairns, you need to be in your correct seat to interject.

Mrs D'ATH: They did not just ignore it; they froze it. That has meant that we have some of the lowest levels of access to bulk-billing, accessibility and affordability. Those sitting in the gallery today know that the difficulty in getting to a GP is, one, to find a GP who does not have a closed list and then to find one that bulk-bills that is affordable. When we talk about cost-of-living pressures, we have to talk about the cost of health care and accessibility. Pressures on our public hospital system are very much contributed to when people with complex and acute conditions cannot access GPs at the right time and in the right place. It is very difficult; their conditions are exacerbated. We need people able to get that care.

Ms Camm interjected.

Mrs D'ATH: I will take that interjection from the member for Whitsunday. There are no new taxes being applied to these GPs. There is a New South Wales ruling, but that ruling did not change the way the Queensland Revenue Office applied that. However, the Treasurer has led the way nationally in making sure there is no implementation of that ruling, which has always been there, so they can have surety going forward over the next couple of years. That is really important because it is only Labor governments that are trying to work with the primary care sector as well as our tertiary hospitals and our public hospital system, and the same goes for housing.

When we talk about the cost of living, it is not like inflation started the moment the Albanese government came to office. What did the Morrison government do? He did nothing during COVID to support our community. In fact, we had to fight the rhetoric out there, the misinformation, and they picked fights with state and territory leaders at the risk of people's lives. I will say that. They did not ensure we had enough vaccines. They did not ensure enough had access to rapid antigen tests. They did not protect the most vulnerable in the aged-care centres as they were supposed to do. That is what

they said they would do. Across the states and territories we were all assured, 'Don't worry, you can rely on us to look after those residents in aged-care facilities when COVID starts coming through the communities,' but they did not. They let them down.

Ms Camm interjected.

Mrs D'ATH: I will take that interjection around Gladstone. We are doing everything possible to recruit amongst a national and international shortage of health workers.

Ms Camm: In Brisbane?

Mrs D'ATH: We are doing everything possible to recruit in the regions.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock. The minister has taken your interjection and is responding to it and you are continuing to interject.

Mrs D'ATH: We are seeking to recruit not only domestically but internationally as well. I have recently said that four international doctors were offered positions and had accepted. One has since chosen to take up a position elsewhere. We are working with those doctors. There are processes that we need to go through with colleges in terms of accreditation, with Ahpra and with immigration and we are working with the Commonwealth. We have a Commonwealth government that understands we need to streamline those processes so we can be competitive in attracting international doctors and specialists to this country.

We also need to train our own. The fact is that the Morrison government actually took Commonwealth supported places for medical students away from Queensland and gave them to regional New South Wales. We have to train up our own. We want JCU and Central Queensland University training in their medical schools in the regions the kids who go to school there, who grow up there, who want to study medicine there and who want to work there. That is what we want because that helps us grow our own and make sure we have the supply chain of workers.

The opposition have put up no alternatives. How would they recruit health workers? What are their health policies? They have a four-point plan that has no jobs, no new hospitals, no beds and no money.

(Time expired)