



Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Record of Proceedings, 20 August 2024


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Health, Environment and Agriculture Committee, Report

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (7.01 pm): I rise today to give my contribution to the Health, Environment and Agriculture Committee report on the estimates proceedings. Before I begin I want to thank all members of the committee for their work and our secretariat for how they helped a very long day run as smoothly as possible. Of course, the same can not be said for all visiting members. Yes, the member for Mudgeeraba knows who I am talking about. After a number of warnings everyone seemed to behave themselves and we got on with the day. Can I add, as the Leader of the House has pointed out, it was indeed the health committee that gave the most question time to non-government members—82 per cent of the day to non-government members and 18 per cent to government members. To my fellow chairs I say someone has to win. We always hear about them asking for more questions and they certainly had the opportunity to do that.

Of course, the committee has the primary areas of responsibility of health, mental health, ambulance services and women, and the environment and the Great Barrier Reef, science and innovation, agricultural industry development, fisheries and rural communities. Five minutes—or 3½ minutes—is not going to be enough to talk to each of them. While I will not get the opportunity to talk about all three areas, I will reserve my comments for the areas of health and, of course, my favourite topic, ambulance services, which are delivered by our hardworking frontline QAS staff each and every day across this great state. I see the QAS capital program had \$28 million planned for construction and replacement of ambulance stations, which I hope I can get to.

On health broadly, the theme of the day was access to care closer to home and that is one that should be celebrated by our Miles Labor government. Those satellite hospitals have seen 52,000 people. That is incredible. Our urgent care clinics—I have one in Kirwan in my electorate of Thuringowa—are state funded as well, and there are also the nurse-led clinics that are popping up all across the state. These facilities are reducing the impact on our emergency departments greatly, and in Townsville alone we are seeing over 300 people a day attend. That is just not sustainable in an aging and growing population. Whether it be the nurse-led clinics, the urgent care clinics, the satellite hospitals, the pharmacy scope of practice, which is something our committee considered some time

ago—and we are seeing free vaccinations for meningococcal B and the paediatric RSV prevention program—it is just incredible the things we are doing as a government to help Queenslanders right across our state.

We see in my own hospital and health service a \$530 million commitment and 143 additional beds and in Kirwan a \$40 million redevelopment of the Kirwan health precinct. I say thank you very much to the health minister for getting behind that. In Townsville city fellow members will know we have the new ambulance station at Burdell about to be opened and, of course, the Kirwan Ambulance Station. I will have some more news later on in the week on something else I am working on in my electorate of Thuringowa.

In QAS quite broadly, there are 188 additional ambulance operatives in the 2024-25 budget including 80 specialised positions in the QAS Clinical Hub and Falls Co-Response Program and commencing construction and design for the redevelopment of a number of facilities such as the Gold Coast Operations Centre at Coomera; planning for the replacement of the Southport, Pimpama and Beenleigh ambulance stations; relocation of the Springwood and Sandgate ambulance stations; and commissioning 155 new replacement ambulance vehicles.

One of the other things that got my attention was when the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow health minister came in and talked about QVAD and a part 9 investigation. We fought hard to get voluntary assisted dying in this state. After those questions I thought, 'This is really interesting. Where is the opposition going with this? Will they use the review that is due in 2025 to pull a lever and further restrict access to VAD? Will they use that part 9 investigation'—I know it is with the coroner at the moment so we cannot talk to that. I thought, 'Will they use this to further repeal or restrict access for people for whom we fought hard in this parliament to provide choice for end of life?' I will fight every day to make sure we retain those laws in this state for terminally ill Queenslanders, no matter where they live.