




Speech By
Brittany Lauga

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Urgent Care Clinics

 **Ms LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (2.10 pm): As a mum, I know how important it is to be able to get to a doctor when you or your child is sick, and I also know how hard it is to get an appointment. That is why I am so pleased that the Miles government has partnered with the federal government to open the new bulk-billed Medicare urgent care clinic in North Rocky. This clinic is open seven days a week with extended hours for all those times you need urgent care for non-life-threatening emergencies from a nurse or doctor without visiting the hospital. Already, this urgent care clinic has treated thousands of local patients.

The federal Labor government promised that 50 urgent care clinics would be established by the end of 2023, and I am pleased that the federal government has delivered on that commitment. There are now 58 of them—not 50—and these clinics have serviced more than 250,000 Australians in just the last several months, including more than 10,000 patients every single week. That is well over half a million patients a year. They are delivering urgent care for non-life-threatening emergencies. They are delivering care where people need it, when they need it. Most importantly, they are taking that pressure off our hospital emergency departments which right across the country are under very serious pressure.

In those several months where 250,000 patients have been looked after, around a third of them are under the age of 15. They are kids who are sick who need to be seen urgently or who have fallen off their skateboard and broken their arm. They need urgent care but they do not necessarily need to go to a fully equipped hospital emergency department and wait, sometimes very long hours, to get the care they need.

The response we are receiving from patients is incredibly positive. Yes, there is more work to be done and, yes, I would love to see more doctors employed at the urgent care clinic, but the quality of care they are receiving from the doctors and nurses at the Rockhampton clinic is very high. Importantly, it is fully bulk-billed so all they need to do is bring their Medicare card. They do not need to pay a gap fee or worry about the possibility of paying a gap fee at all. This has been a missing part of the Australian healthcare system that has been identified by lots of experts, lots of providers and, frankly, lots of patients as well.

I am incredibly pleased that the federal government is keen to scale up more clinics across the country and to evaluate how these existing clinics are working. I am so proud that the Miles Labor government is delivering a record \$809 million budget for our CQ Hospital and Health Service. We are hiring more doctors and nurses, building a \$20 million new cardiac hybrid theatre and delivering a PET scanner and a new \$90 million mental health unit at Rockhampton Hospital. My No. 1 priority is and always will be providing quality health care closer to home for all Central Queenslanders. Those opposite cut 197 jobs from the Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service. Based on that track record, the LNP cannot be trusted with our health system.