



Speech By  
**Bryson Head**


**MEMBER FOR CALLIDE**

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Record of Proceedings, 11 December 2024

**MOTION**

**Women and Girls' Health Strategy**

 **Mr HEAD** (Callide—LNP) (5.56 pm): I am happy to rise in this House to speak about women's health in Queensland. I have done that many times in this chamber because the former minister for women neglected women in the bush, especially when it came to maternity services here in Queensland. I will not back down when it comes to defending maternity services in rural and regional Queensland. I will happily stand up for the women in Queensland who were neglected by the former Labor government. It is incredibly rich for the member for Murrumba to come into this chamber and move a motion suggesting that the LNP does not care about women.

Let's talk about his record for women in the bush when he was health minister. He was the health minister during the 'bush baby' crisis here in Queensland. He was the health minister who closed the Chinchilla maternity ward—sorry, they could not accept it was closed. They called it bypassed, but it was bypassed over 2,000 days. That is not a bypass; that is a closure. That is the record of the former premier when he was health minister. I will not be lectured to by those opposite when it comes to women's health in Queensland.

The Leader of the Opposition was deputy premier when Gladstone went on bypass. Gladstone, a large regional centre here in Queensland, did not have a maternity service for nearly a year. For nearly a year the women in that community could not access a fundamental and critical service in Queensland, and that is an absolute disgrace. I happily stood up alongside those women who were neglected by the former Labor government. When it comes to women in the bush, let's talk about the member for Waterford's failures when she was health minister.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr HEAD:** Thank you for your guidance, team. There were multiple failures and many games played by the member for Waterford when she was health minister. I tabled a petition with nearly 4,000 signatories asking the government to reinstate maternity services at Biloela. Did we get a reopened maternity service? No, we did not. Time and time again we had all these excuses about a lack of staff and we had no formal commitment by the former government to reinstate those services.

What have we found out since? I have already been working with the new Minister for Health and his team. We committed to reopening maternity services in Biloela—unreservedly committed—because we back in rural maternity services and we want to support women's health in the bush. What did we inherit? We have been advised that we inherited an operating theatre at Biloela—and there is only one there—that is not optimal for surgery or birthing services. We had the former minister for health saying that they might reinstate maternity services in Biloela when it was safe to do so but that there were no staff. Well, you are not going to get staff to a facility if there is no facility for them to use. It is like trying to say, 'We'll get a chef but we'll worry about the kitchen later.'

Another thing I found very interesting was that when Gladstone was on bypass for a very long time the member for Gladstone was incredibly silent on that issue. He was silent when the women in Central Queensland were neglected under the former Labor government. The new minister is already cleaning up the mess that we inherited. Yesterday, all of a sudden—when we now have a health minister who is dedicated to reinstating a lot of these rural maternity services and is working with the frontline staff who are critical to delivering these services—he finally asked a question. Who would have thought after all these years of silence that he would finally ask a question?

I am not afraid to ask questions, and I have already taken the opportunity in this chamber to ask a question about the gaps in rural maternity services and the steps the new minister is taking to reinstate maternity services in Queensland, because I do care. Regardless of what side of the chamber I sit on in this House, I will always be asking questions of the government and ensuring the government of the day is delivering services in Queensland.

I cannot finish this speech without mentioning those I have worked with in advocating for better maternity services for women in the bush and who have shared their stories: Yvette and Beatrix—with Beatrix being born on the Warrego Highway; Chloe and Matilda—with Matilda being born on the Bruce Highway; and Katie and Dougy—and Dougy would not be here if it were not for rural maternity services. The LNP absolutely support women in Queensland.

*(Time expired)*