




Speech By
Donna Kirkland

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Record of Proceedings, 10 December 2024

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Rockhampton Electorate

 **Mrs KIRKLAND** (Rockhampton—LNP) (2.50 pm): I am thrilled to have been appointed as the assistant minister for mental health, drug and alcohol treatment, families and seniors, and Central Queensland. I am excited to not only represent my electorate of Rockhampton but also represent all Central Queenslanders in this important portfolio. I also know how critical mental health is for all Queenslanders, particularly those in remote and regional areas who often have to travel further and wait longer to access services. Indeed, in my electorate of Rockhampton, constituents have shared with me their challenges accessing the mental health services that they need—families separated whilst children requiring services are forced to travel to Brisbane for care that they should be able to access locally. I have hit the ground running to understand the challenges and opportunities ahead of the mental health sector across the state, and I am aware that the sector is supported not only by clinicians and health workers but also by stakeholders and community groups, and I have started engaging with these stakeholders.

I have met with the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists to hear about the opportunities to enhance psychiatric services for Queenslanders. I also met with Arafmi, a not-for-profit organisation that supports the carers of people living with mental ill health, an organisation that does critical work for Queenslanders. I was pleased to speak with Arafmi about the Crisafulli LNP government's \$50 million step-up step-down youth mental health program, including one facility in Rockhampton. The step-up step-down facility will support young people who have recently experienced, or who are at increased risk of experiencing, an acute episode of mental illness. These services offer stepped-up care when more is needed and can be offered in patients' own homes or stepped-down care to help young people get back into the routine of everyday life after spending time in hospital due to their mental illness. This forms part of the Crisafulli government's investment into youth mental health services to be funded by the mental health levy.

This also delivers on our Easier Access to Health Services plan to deliver health services when Queenslanders need them and to reinvest every dollar from the mental health levy back into vital mental health services and facilities across the state.

I look forward to delivering on other commitments within the government's plan, like \$95 million for a new Queensland Academy of Health Sciences in Rockhampton. The Crisafulli government will build the state's first regionally based Queensland academy campus to help high-achieving local students follow their dreams of becoming doctors, nurses, paramedics and allied health professionals where they live. This commitment will help secure a pipeline of health workers for our hospitals into the future, connecting students with professionals in the health science, research science and academic industries and providing a pathway from high school to university and into frontline health work.

This is part of our government's plan to secure a home-grown health workforce for regional Queensland's future, and this is just the beginning. We are diagnosing the problems in the health system, treating the issues and curing the health crisis. Queenslanders deserve a world-class health system they can rely on, no matter where they live, including Central Queensland, and that is what the Crisafulli LNP government will deliver.