




Speech By
Barbara O'Shea

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; HEALTH,
ENVIRONMENT AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE, REPORT**

 **Dr O'SHEA** (South Brisbane—ALP) (5.12 pm): Today I rise to address the Appropriation Bill 2025 with respect to the responsibility of the Health, Environment and Innovation Committee. I would first like to extend my thanks to the departmental officers from Health, the Ambulance Service, and Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation for their hard work in responding to requests for information and attending the budget estimates process, as well as the incredibly hardworking committee secretariat for its support and assistance during the examination process. Given the limited amount of time provided to debate this report, I will focus on health and ambulance services, as the health budget accounts for over 20 per cent of total proposed government spending for the 2025-26 financial year.

What Queenslanders and my constituents want to see from our state health services is very simple—that when they have an emergency they can be treated quickly at the nearest emergency department, that if they need review by a specialist they will be seen promptly at our outpatient departments, or that if they require elective surgery they will have that surgery in a reasonable timeframe. Sadly, that is not the case at the moment. Currently, patients are waiting hours in ambulances at the doors of emergency departments due to a lack of available beds. We heard during estimates that in the past year there has been an increase of almost 13,000 patients waiting longer than clinically recommended to see a specialist and that the number of patients on the elective surgery waitlist waiting longer than clinically indicated for their surgery has increased by over 55 per cent. That is a lot of people in pain waiting to have their hips and knees operated on.

This government has promised to deliver 2,600 new hospital beds. However, during the estimates hearing the chief executives of the Gold Coast and Wide Bay hospital and health services could not provide any timeframe for the completion of the new Coomera or Bundaberg hospitals, and the only specific reference to new beds I could find in the government's budget highlights for 2025-26 was for 186 public hospital beds at the Springfield Mater Hospital. While these new beds are of course welcome, at this rate it would take 14 years to deliver those 2,600 beds for our state, and Queenslanders cannot wait that long.

The lack of available hospital beds for elective surgery patients has been exacerbated over the past few months with a surge of patients being hospitalised with flu, leading to the cancellation of elective surgery at some hospitals. We heard during estimates that 86 per cent of patients who end up in hospital with influenza have not been vaccinated against the flu. Evidence tabled at the public hearing revealed the shocking statistic that Queensland's flu vaccination rates were lower than the national average for all age groups. Flu vaccinations are widely available and free for all Queenslanders over six months of age, but people have to know about the program to access it. During the public hearing we discovered that only \$675,000 was spent on promoting the flu vaccination program this year while almost three times this amount was spent by the government advertising its plans to build hospital infrastructure and recruit staff.

Appropriate funding of health promotion campaigns is essential for the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders, whether it is raising awareness of flu vaccinations or sun safety. Evidence was provided during the estimates hearing of Queenslanders having the highest incidence of melanoma in Australia, so it is vitally important that sun safety messaging continues. However, this government was unable to advise the level of funding allocated in this budget to sun safety social marketing campaigns.

During the public hearing we also discovered that there are now no plans for a new spinal injuries unit at the PA Hospital in my electorate despite there currently being a 30-bed shortage and a further 120 beds required to meet future need for spinal injury patients. Although the government repeatedly promised all commitments in the Women and Girls' Health Strategy would be honoured, it was disclosed at the hearing that publicly funded IVF for women with cancer and other complex medical conditions had not commenced as planned by 1 July this year.