




Speech By
Hon. Meaghan Scanlon

MEMBER FOR GAVEN

Record of Proceedings, 27 August 2025

MOTION

Chief Health Officer, Appointment

 **Hon. MAJ SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (6.10 pm): The promise to put doctors in charge has not lasted long, has it? It is very telling who is not speaking on this motion today. We know the Premier has very little respect for the role of Chief Health Officer. Who could forget what the then opposition leader said about the then Chief Health Officer—that she was a ‘punch drunk bureaucrat’ and was ‘power hungry’. This is a man who we know likes control and likes discipline, but the appointment of the Chief Health Officer of this state is important. It is not a plaything of this Premier or his cabinet. It is a role that is supposed to be appointed by the Public Service, even if that does not support the ideology of those sitting opposite.

I want to be really clear: we all know that this went through a merit-based selection process and that did its job. It informed the government that the successful applicant was to be Mr Hajkowicz. We understand that he was verbally offered that role. Then it somehow was blocked, not because he lacked merit. In fact, we are unclear about the exact reason that suggestion was blocked. All we have to go by is media report after media report which indicates that there has clearly been political interference. Those opposite were very keen to sprout the recommendations of the Coaldrake review about ‘undue influence’ when they were in opposition. It seems as though those standards are very different now that they are in government.

Why would the job offer now be withdrawn if it were not for some form of interference? I have never seen a director-general make a decision and communicate that verbally with someone and then suddenly change their mind. We are seriously expected to believe that this had nothing to do with media reports of Mr Hajkowicz or his family’s alleged view against the stadium at Victoria Park or his political beliefs, despite the fact that media must have got that information from somewhere within government. Then we are also expected to believe that it had nothing to do with those media reports that senior government ministers ‘intervened’.

The health minister’s amendment to this motion notes that there is a recruitment process underway, so there is another recruitment process—taxpayers’ money being spent again—because there has been some sort of decision which, on the face of it, appears to be influence because the first recommendation by independent experts was not supported.

We have hospitals that are full of flu victims at the moment—the vast majority of those unvaccinated. Our hospitals are under enormous pressure. Others have already outlined why it is important that we have a permanent Chief Health Officer, to make sure the advice and public communication is being provided to Queenslanders. What is very clear is that this government is not interested in real health outcomes. They have spent three times more on political advertising than on a vaccination campaign. All of the shadow cabinet here have been up-front about our flu vaccination

status, but I am the only Gold Coast MP so far who has publicly come out in support of having the flu shot. I am particularly interested in what perhaps the member for Coomera thinks about getting the flu vaccination and those other Gold Coast members of parliament—

Mr O'Connor: I've had mine.

Ms SCANLON: I take the interjection from the member for Bonney. He has had his. That is good. What about the rest of the cabinet? Their Premier and Deputy Premier have said that apparently it is now a decision between them and their health practitioner: your body, your choice, right, except for when it is about women!

It does not stop there. The LNP's obsession with privatising our hospitals will have consequences too. When I am talking about Gold Coast MPs, I want to talk about some of the media reports today about those opposite now wanting to look at privatising the Coomera Hospital. We have already seen under their plan a decision to axe those additional hospital beds in Robina—axing those beds in Robina.

Mr Nicholls: It was your deal with Australian Unity at Robina.

Ms SCANLON: I take the interjection from the health minister.

Mr Nicholls interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Minister for Health, you have had your turn.

Ms SCANLON: He was critical of hospital beds in Robina, but now when they are in Coomera it is a different story.

Mr Nicholls: That you failed to deliver with Australian Unity, a private provider. Come on—be consistent.

Ms SCANLON: It is not really making an awful lot of sense, member for Clayfield. While those opposite are playing political games, they are axing new hospital beds in Robina and nurses are being treated like enemies. Queenslanders deserve a permanent Chief Health Officer. They deserve a government that is not at war with health workers and they deserve integrity. That is what they were promised and that is not what we are getting from this government.