



Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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MOTION

White, Ms C

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (6.25 pm): Being the health minister is one of the hardest jobs in government. It is tough. Every day you are faced with decisions that impact people's lives. I know that; I have done it. I understand what the minister faces. What matters most in that job, more than any KPI or any headline, is listening—really listening. It is not a perfect system. Things, of course, do go wrong. When they do—especially when they go wrong after you have introduced a new policy—the least you can do is sit down and hear from the people who have been directly affected. When I was health minister I tried each and every day to do that.

I note that the member for Scenic Rim and the member for Mudgeeraba raised the tragic case of Wayne Irving. I spent many hours speaking directly with the family of Wayne Irving. I listened, even when it was hard—even when the stories were incredibly confronting—because that is how you learn. That is how you can use your position to change things for the better, to fix things and to help solve the problems. It is also how you show respect and it is also how you demonstrate to the community that you are a leader and you are prepared to do the hard things. That engenders confidence for the community in our health system which is also really important. That is why I want to extend my deepest sympathies to the family of Christine White and to her incredible children. I think they have shown enormous courage in speaking out about their experiences and what happened to their mum.

Let's be clear: this tragedy happened in the same month that the health minister's new performance KPIs were introduced in our hospitals. When you change the rules, there is always pressure on staff and potential risks to patient care. When someone has died, the decent thing to do is spend time with that family. When Brooke reached out to me after seeing some of the advocacy I had been doing around women's health, I called her, I met with her and her sisters—Rosemary, Amy and Christill—and I listened to their story. They told me about the day that Brooke found their mum alone in her home, in the bathroom, after searching for pain relief. It is so important to sit down with families who have had that experience, because it is those details that stay with you every day in your role as minister and it is what drives you to do better, to make the system better. It is what motivates you each and every day. Those details matter. After yesterday, it is clear that the health minister is not across all of the facts of this matter. I think it is really important that he takes the time. We have been in here for almost an hour. He could have had a meeting with the family in that time.

Queenslanders deserve to know that in their moment of need—when they walk into a hospital or when they are on an ambulance ramp—they will be looked after. For the minister to say that he will not meet with the family because there is an investigation underway is a cop-out, quite frankly. No-one is asking the minister to interfere. This family, who are grieving, are simply asking to be heard, because they do not want another Queenslanders to die at home, alone and in pain.

If the minister cannot even meet with them, if he cannot even listen to their experience, how can we hope to make the system better? How can we hope to relieve some of the pressure that this very busy health system is under? Stories are so powerful because they do stay with you and help drive and motivate you. I think every Queenslander should have faith that when they need help, when they are at their most vulnerable, the health system will be there. Listening does not just show empathy; it saves lives. It is a lesson that this minister clearly needs to learn fast before another Queensland family pays the ultimate price.