




Speech By
Hon. Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Maternity Services

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (10.11 am): The Crisafulli government is committed to delivering world-class health services for all Queenslanders, particularly for new mums and bubs. Fixing the shortfall in regional and rural birthing services left by Labor is an absolute priority. As part of the Crisafulli government's 100-day plan, we commissioned a critical assessment into regional maternity services. We know that the decade of mismanagement under Labor's four health ministers, three of them sitting opposite, left maternity services in crisis and chaos across the state. A decade of Labor neglect resulted in workforce shortages in key maternity professions across regional Queensland.

There are staffing vacancies of up to 14.2 per cent in obstetrics, 17.9 per cent in anaesthetics and 11.5 per cent in midwifery. The failure to recruit skilled maternity staff means mums about to give birth in rural and regional areas have been forced to travel to larger facilities, often hundreds of kilometres away from home. Between 1 July 2023 and 8 January 2025, eight facilities in regional and rural Queensland, including Beaudesert, Ingham and Mareeba, were on birthing bypass. Birthing services in Cooktown and Biloela have been on bypass since 2022. We will restore those critical services. Our commitment in our first 100 days was to transparency and honesty about the state's birthing services so that we can begin to address the resources needed to fix Labor's legacy of neglect. We are starting. It is a long journey but we are on the road.

The Crisafulli government is also committed to supporting new mums who need specialised care after birth. We will deliver perinatal mental health beds across Queensland to address Labor's failures. Earlier this week, the member for Murrumba, the current Leader of the Opposition, had the gall to stand in this place and claim that the Crisafulli government is 'scrapping perinatal mental health beds for Queensland mums'. The Leader of the Opposition knows this is not true but said it anyway. The Crisafulli government has already committed to deliver 30 perinatal mental health beds, including eight in Townsville, as part of our boost to deliver health services across Queensland. The former health minister, the member for Waterford and leadership aspirant, got her sums completely wrong when she announced that 30 beds could be delivered across the state for \$39 million.

Mr Crisafulli: She's doing numbers for them.

Mr NICHOLLS: I take that interjection from the Premier. We cannot wait to see the budget response! The announced eight beds for Townsville were to cost \$38 million, exhausting the entire budget for the statewide 30-bed program.

Ms Fentiman: This is what the *Courier-Mail* reported. You buggered that story up.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Waterford, withdraw that unparliamentary language, please.

Ms FENTIMAN: I withdraw.

Mr NICHOLLS: Let me be clear: the Crisafulli government will be delivering all 30 perinatal beds across Queensland and we will be delivering the eight beds in Townsville. We will be doing it sooner than the Labor government were ever going to. They were never going to be able to do it because they did not put money in the budget to deliver it.

Labor's disgraceful scare campaign on our commitment to deliver perinatal mental health beds is another example of their strategy to tell the big mistruth, to tell it often and to tell it loudly. Scare campaigns are a specialty of the three former health ministers, all desperately clamouring to prove their leadership credentials. The Crisafulli government has a plan, the Easier Access to Health Services Plan. The Labor Party only have a discredited scare campaign.