



Speech By
Hon. Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 26 June 2025

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE
AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**



Hon. TJ NICHOLLS (Clayfield—LNP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (4.20 pm): This budget delivers the single greatest investment in health care in Queensland's history. This budget provides \$33.1 billion in capital and operating funding for health and ambulance services, confirming the Crisafulli government's commitment to deliver world-class health services for every Queenslanders when and where they need it.

When I sat down with the Treasurer to frame the 2025-26 budget from the health perspective, we did not start with the dollars; we were focused squarely on the outcomes. This followed our early action to axe a tax. Within 100 days of the election, we delivered on our commitment to stop Labor's patients tax and that has been delivered. We stopped Queenslanders unnecessarily paying more when visiting their GP. We were not like those opposite, looking for headlines built around dazzling dollar amounts but with scant regard to providing the services that were actually needed.

Speaking of those opposite, I must address yet more scare tactics from the Leader of the Opposition, who earlier today claimed that waiting lists have exploded and will get longer. Let's put a few facts on the record. The number of Queenslanders waiting for elective surgery more than doubled under Labor, from 27,950 in February 2015 to 64,171 in October 2024. That is the fact. The current elective surgery waitlist is 62,727, lower than what we inherited from those opposite.

In April 2025, the Crisafulli government oversaw the single largest reduction in the waitlist since 2015—a reduction of 2,750 people in a single month. This budget builds on this success by making the greatest investment in elective surgery in Queensland's history—\$1.752 billion. This morning we just heard more mistakes and more mistruths from the mistake-prone opposition leader.

We said we would diagnose, treat and cure Labor's health crisis. What was that crisis? Record ambulance ramping, record numbers of Queenslanders on elective surgery waitlists and record numbers of Queenslanders stuck waiting for a specialist appointment. That was the situation before the Crisafulli LNP government was elected, and since taking office we have discovered the cost blowouts, the delays and all the forgotten or overlooked requirements for hospitals in Labor's so-called Big Build—in reality, the dud build—the capacity expansion program.

This first LNP budget means we can continue to deliver improved health outcomes for Queenslanders. The record dollars allow for: 30,000 elective surgeries to be delivered in 2025-26, on top of the more than 12,000 referrals to Surgery Connect made this year, thanks to our \$100 million funding injection; a reduction in ambulance ramping and improved patient flow through our \$1.7 billion investment; the building of three new hospitals, the expansion of a further 10, the new Queensland Cancer Centre, and new and upgraded health facilities across the state; more ambulances, more stations, more paramedics and new equipment, with more than a billion dollars invested in the Queensland Ambulance Service, including the biggest single uplift in capital funding for the Queensland Ambulance Service—a quarter of a billion dollars over four years—never funded by the Labor Party;

together with progress on growing the number of health workers to 46,000 by 2032, and that is on top of the more than 3,500 health workers we have employed since coming to office in November. These were our commitments to the people of Queensland and, with this budget, we continue to deliver.

We are bringing world-class health care to benefit every Queenslanders, from our most popular cities here in the south-east to the most remote bush outposts. This budget invests in our Hospital Rescue Plan and sees the end of the former government's failed capacity expansion program. The Crisafulli LNP government is actually funding these critical health infrastructure projects, unlike those opposite. This includes \$5.592 billion of new money for these capital projects, addressing the cost overruns under Labor. That is why I was pleased to hear from the CEO of Infrastructure Partnerships Australia, Andrew Dwyer, who said the budget 'begins the journey of fixing longstanding structural issues'.

This budget funds the construction of three new hospitals—at Toowoomba, Coomera and Bundaberg—and addresses all the previous government's inefficiencies and deficiencies which the reviewer, Sam Sangster, in terms of the hospital build program, described as an 'exercise in futility'.

We are adding, member for Gaven, 200 more beds at Coomera, as was originally sought by the Gold Coast Health and Hospital Service.

Ms Scanlon: When?

Mr NICHOLLS: They asked for 600 under Labor; they got 400 and a promise of something at Robina by 2024 that was never likely to be developed until 2028. They failed to deliver on their own promises.

We are also moving all services to single sites in both Bundaberg and Toowoomba—single sites. We are funding the expansion of another 10 major hospitals alongside the establishment of a new state-of-the-art Queensland Cancer Centre based at the Herston Health Precinct. Our \$18.53 billion capital budget over five years is a record investment in the future of the Queensland health system. It is real money and can give Queenslanders confidence we are delivering on our commitments outlined in the Hospital Rescue Plan.

The Hospital Rescue Plan is delivering more than 2,600 new beds right across metro, regional and rural Queensland, alongside more investment in a bigger health workforce. We are also putting \$3.159 billion over five years in our Timely Investment Infrastructure Maintenance program to ensure our hospital and health services can carry out essential infrastructure and asset maintenance, replacing Labor's failed sustaining capital program.

Despite Queensland Health's infrastructure asset base growing from \$8 billion to more than \$30 billion during Labor's time in office, the former government siphoned off the funds from sustaining capital that was meant for critical asset maintenance to sugar-hit, headline-grabbing announcements, leaving zero dollars in the forward estimates—zero dollars—and this was clearly exposed in the 2024 Auditor-General's health report.

For the first time since 2010-11, we have uplifted the base capital allowance for maintenance, with new funding of \$1.34 billion over two years from 2024-25 for approved but unfunded projects under the former Labor government. We are actually fixing up their mistakes. We are also increasing the funding for this program to \$550 million in each of 2026-27 and 2027-28 where there was zero—zero—money available under Labor.

Under Labor, too many Queenslanders were waiting too long for their surgery. Some 30,000 Queenslanders will be able to access elective surgery in 2025-26, thanks to a \$1.75 billion, four-year investment. I want to thank the private providers like Mater, St Vincent's, Uniting Care and Ramsay who will come on board and will deliver more and give us better value. They have certainty of the program over the next four years because we listened to them and put the money in the budget.

The positive feedback from our private sector partners was loud and clear. Oli Steele, the CEO of St Vincent's Private Hospital, said the investment is a 'major boost which will support the forward planning and certainty that the private sector seeks'. Mater Group Chief Executive, Julia Strickland-Bellamy, acknowledged the Crisafulli government's 'record uplift in surgery connect funding means Mater Hospitals across the state will be able to assist in treating more public patients more quickly'. Ramsay Health Care said the investment 'relieves pressure on the public health system, stabilises waitlists by delivering 30,000 elective surgeries in 2025-26, helps more Queenslanders access the care they need, faster, and strengthens the role and sustainability of private hospitals'. UnitingCare expressed their support, saying the record investment will 'help ease pressure on the public health system by delivering elective surgeries and positive health outcomes for patients across the communities we serve'.

Our successful Surgery Connect investment supports public patients having their surgery at a private hospital. Thanks to initiatives like Surgery Connect Surge, in April we saw the largest single fall in elective surgery, as I mentioned. That is a trend we are invested in continuing because these are not just numbers on a page—these are real people waiting to receive life-changing care. The budget backs up our work so far, reducing delays, stabilising and managing the elective surgery waiting list and puts in place the foundation on which future improvements will be built.

While there is still a lot to do to bring waitlist numbers down, this budget demonstrates the Crisafulli LNP government's determination to do what it takes to support the health of Queenslanders needing life-changing care. We are backing these improvements with the largest ever expansion of Queensland Health's workforce: 46,000 additional health workers on the ground by 2032, including 34,200 additional clinicians—more than 4,700 of those will join in 2025-26, including 3,350 clinicians. How are we achieving this? This historic budget is providing an additional \$6.9 billion in funding over five years to support health services where they are needed. The plans covers many of our biggest and most essential pieces of work, including the elective surgery waitlist.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Speaker has reviewed and approved my speech on the budget for incorporation. As such, I ask that the remainder of my speech be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*.

The speech read as follows—

Recently I had the pleasure of visiting a few of the sites where the community is benefiting.

Last week I was in Townsville, opening the new hybrid operating theatre, which is a first-of-its-kind and will provide a much needed boost to elective surgery capacity in North Queensland.

In Central Queensland, I opened the new Orthopaedic Clinic at Rockhampton Hospital, which frees much-needed space in the ED while the Crisafulli Government continues the masterplanning process.

In Biloela, I inspected the recently upgraded operating theatre and birthing suite, which takes us one step closer to resuming birthing services which have been closed for more than 1,000 days—something Labor failed to properly address.

In Mackay, we're getting on with the job of the much-needed expansion of the hospital and delivery of a new helipad.

I have also been privileged to visit the new surgical outpatients area at Queensland Children's Hospital and meet with some of the young patients and families there. This redevelopment will provide more than 14,000 appointments every year for children and young people with complex gastroenterology conditions and those requiring plastic and reconstructive surgery.

This Budget helps reduce ambulance ramping, with measures like the 55 million dollars Patient Flow Response Fund to enable hospitals across the system to flexibly respond to emerging pressures in patient flow and reduce ramping in our state's busiest emergency departments.

Our pledge is to get ambulance ramping from the highs under Labor to below 30 per cent by October 2028, and this investment sets it on track.

Mr Speaker, new Budget measures will allow Queensland Health to continue accessing up to 515 beds over the next two years in partnership with the private sector to help patient flow.

In the face of rising demands on the health system, we are taking action now to ensure beds are available when and where they are needed, and patients can be transferred faster to receive the urgent care they need.

I was happy to the support for this investment from the President of AMA Queensland Dr Nick Yim who said "We commend initiatives to improve patient flow and use private hospitals to reduce elective surgery backlogs, which AMA Queensland called for in its Surgical Wait List Roundtable Action Plan"

There will be more paramedics, more ambulance stations and more ambulance vehicles on the road to meet growing demand.

More than 1 billion dollars is being invested in the Queensland Ambulance Service in this Budget.

New stations are being built at Beenleigh Central and Southport East, and the 24/7 QAS Clinical Hub in Kedron, staffed by paramedics and specialist clinicians, will be expanded.

23.7 million dollars will be invested next year in existing stations, and to provide relief accommodation for paramedics in regional and remote locations.

More than 16 million dollars is allocated to provide operational equipment including new defibrillators to ensure our first responders have the advanced tools they need to do their life-saving work.

45 million dollars will be invested in 170 new and replacement ambulance vehicles, fitted with the latest equipment.

And over the next four years we are employing an additional 900 ambulance personnel who will be embedded in communities right across the state.

In addition to the Hospital Rescue Plan, we have budgeted an extra 638 million dollars to be spent on the Mater Hospital Springfield to boost public health services in the growing south west metropolitan corridor—I'm advised this investment will provide for an estimated 200,000 public patients a year.

This is the first time—it wasn't in Labor's last budget—money will be provided to operationalise these critical public health services.

This investment includes funding for 186 hospital beds including 12 new paediatric beds, an emergency department, operating theatres, an intensive care ward, and maternity and paediatric care.

This is the rapidly expanding part of south east Queensland that takes in Ipswich and Logan.

Our Budget investment equips Mater Hospital Springfield to meet the region's current healthcare needs, while ensuring it is future-proofed to accommodate growing demand.

We are investing in the health of our littlest Queenslanders.

Up to 60,000 Queensland children a year are expected to benefit from free health checks when the Healthy Kindy Kids program kicked off in this year's Budget is fully operational.

This 37.5 million dollar program will see pilots start in a select number of kindies in Townsville in October 2025.

A staged roll out will follow, ramping up to reach all government-approved kindy locations across the state.

The free health checks will play an important role in supporting the health and developmental needs of young children throughout Queensland.

Early identification of developmental delays or concerns gives parents, carers and educators the vital information they need to ensure children receive the right support at the right time, before the formal start of their school education journey.

Also funded in the Budget is a 50 million dollar investment in two new Youth Step Up Step Down services that will enhance mental health support, including in regional Queensland.

The first of these projects is a six-bed facility in Rockhampton which will provide short-stay residential services for young patients.

Existing services are located in Cairns, Logan and Caboolture, and the Rockhampton centre will take the total number of youth Step Up Step Down beds across all facilities to 24.

Mr Speaker, the Crisafulli LNP Government's first budget also delivers for my electorate of Clayfield.

Funded in the Budget is a 6 million dollar investment in Brothers Rugby Club at Crosby Park in Albion.

It is one of Brisbane's oldest and most successful rugby clubs.

This investment will secure the future of the Club for generations to come.

The project will build new dressing sheds, better disabled access, and a new gym.

The 2025-26 Budget will deliver a new City Glider bus service from Hamilton Portside to Woolloongabba.

This partnership with Brisbane City Council will connect, to the city and beyond, a rapidly changing area of my electorate, the Brisbane River precinct that is transforming from port services to residential.

This, alongside the LNP's locked-in 50c fares, will ensure that Clayfield continues to be well-served by public transport.

This Budget also funds something I have long been fighting for—a \$24.9 million upgrade to the Kedron State High School performing arts centre.

This Budget delivers for Clayfield—despite the falsehoods in the Member for Murrumba's first and last Budget Reply speech. The Leader of the Opposition claimed the Government has cut funding for the redevelopment of Albion Railway Station.

Albion Station is of course in my electorate of Clayfield and in my tenure there has been a conga line of Labor candidates—they come, they go—standing beside a conga line of Labor Transport Ministers, promising to fund upgrades of Albion Station—never funded..!

In 2024 they had another crack, but all we got were artists renders—no tenders issued, nothing in the Budget.

The only thing the claim by the Opposition Leader proves is his incompetence in his desperation to make unfounded claims of cuts.

Mr Speaker, the 2025-26 Queensland Budget is a Budget for all Queenslanders.

We have put in place, and funded, an Easier Access to Health Services Plan and a Hospital Rescue Plan.

All this as part of a 33.1 billion dollar health budget, the first time investment in our health system exceeds 30 billion dollars.

It is a Budget focused on delivering outcomes—more hospitals, more health workers, more ambulance officers and services, more access to elective surgery.