




Speech By
Hon. Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 27 August 2025

MOTION

Chief Health Officer, Appointment

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (5.36 pm):
I move the following amendment—

That all words after 'That this House' be omitted and the following paragraphs inserted:

- '1. notes the Chief Health Officer is a public-facing role;
2. notes the Chief Health Officer is one that requires stability;
3. notes the Chief Health Officer is one that requires longevity;
4. notes the Chief Health Officer is appointed by the chief executive of the department under the provisions of the Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011;
5. notes the recruitment process for a Chief Health Officer is underway;
6. notes governments should be held to account for issues affecting health outcomes in Queensland.'

We heard from the Leader of the Opposition in relation to sicknesses in Queensland. The sickness in Queensland is the sickness that has been bequeathed to Queensland Health by those opposite. After a decade of decline they have left the Queensland Health system in a failing state. We heard the Leader of the Opposition talk about vaccination and vaccination rates. I have said and I continue to say on a number of occasions that the former Labor government failed to fund free flu vaccines in Queensland for the 2025 flu season. They failed to put money in the budget that enabled that system to roll out. One of our very first actions was to do that. We are spending more, and doing it for longer, on promoting free flu vaccines in Queensland—\$675,000. We started a month earlier and we will finish later.

It is interesting to note the history of the success of free flu vaccinations in Queensland. Flu vaccinations in Queensland hit a peak in 2022 of 36 per cent—the first year after COVID when COVID and flu vaccines were available jointly. What happened a year later in 2023 under the Labor government? The vaccination rate went from 36 per cent to 31 per cent—a five per cent decline. What happened the following year when there were free flu vaccinations? It was 29 per cent. It fell yet again. It is with a sense of disbelief that I listen to those opposite talk to us about failures in free flu vaccination. What we are now seeing is a very rapid uptake in terms of vaccinations in Queensland.

The position of Chief Health Officer is an important role. As I said in my ministerial statement on Tuesday, one did not need to be a crystal ball gazer to understand that the Labor Party would seek to raise this issue as a diversion from their own failures, as a diversion from the decade of decline, as a diversion from their failure to actually even ask me a question during health estimates. That is what we have faced this whole week.

As I indicated in the amendment to the motion, Queensland Health's campaign to recruit a permanent Chief Health Officer is ongoing. As those opposite well know, this is an appointment that is made by the chief executive; it is not an appointment made by cabinet. That is a matter that will be dealt with under the Hospital and Health Boards Act, as the motion indicates.

Importantly, what this motion seeks to do is divert attention from the Labor Party's failures, whether it is their failures around ambulance ramping, whether it is their failures around elective surgery, whether it is their failures around specialist outpatients, whether it is their failures to properly budget and their \$12 billion overspend or whether it is their failed capacity expansion program that we are in the process of remedying. They are diverting attention from their failure to provide real-time data, their failure around birthing bypass at Cooktown and Biloela, their failure to actually properly sustain the capital investment in the budget and their failure to properly deliver promises that they made on the eve of the election around perinatal mental health beds. This motion and the actions of the Queensland Labor Party this week indicate that they are desperate to avoid their record and their decade of decline being made public to Queenslanders. The motion should be voted down and the amendment accepted.