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## Queensland health minister masking deliberate ED cash grab

Queensland Health Minister Steven Miles is grasping at straws trying to explain away the public hospital cash grab for private health insurance dollars and ignoring the increasing pressure it is putting on public waiting lists, says Australian Private Hospitals Association (APHA) CEO Michael Roff.

Quoted in today's *The Australian* newspaper Mr Miles suggests a 736 percent increase in private emergency admissions since 2007-08 is due to demand for public services, not a premeditated ploy by public hospitals to top up their coffers with private health insurance cash.

"The numbers alone make Mr Miles statement laughable. An increase of several hundred percent in 10 years only occurs with a deliberate plan. We know that public hospitals actively prevent people accessing private hospitals, even when they explicitly ask to be transferred to one.

"Demand for private hospital services in Queensland has grown steadily in the last decade, with an increase of 46 percent between 2007 and 2017. There is no drop off in desire for private care, what has increased is the public push for private health insurance dollars.

"Not only is Mr Miles clearly unaware of what is happening in Queensland hospitals, he's also failing to take responsibility for the impact this is having on waiting lists and the lives of ordinary Queenslanders.

"The numbers published in *The Australian* show public hospitals in Queensland are clearly putting profits from harvesting privately insured patients ahead of addressing the public waiting list. The article quotes private elective admissions have increased by 153 percent, compared to 24 percent for public patients.

"That means an elderly person with no private health insurance might sit on a waiting list for a year for a much needed hip replacement, with deteriorating quality of life, while someone with private health insurance skips ahead of them in the queue.

"That's not making decisions about who should access care based on clinical need. That's making decisions based on accounting need.

"But this is not just an issue in Queensland, this is a national problem. Around Australia people are being left languishing on waiting lists while those with private health insurance are cajoled into using their insurance in the public system and jumping the public queue. It's time for states to be held to account and for Australians to get the health system they deserve," Mr Roff said.

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