

Inquiry - Health Practitioner Regulation National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submission from the Australian Workers' Union of
Employees, Queensland and the Australian
Workers' Union – Queensland Branch to the
Health, Environment and Innovation Committee
regarding the inquiry into the *Health Practitioner
Regulation National Law and Other Legislation
Amendment Bill 2024*



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The Australian Workers' Union of Employees, Queensland (AWUEQ) and The Australian Workers Union – Queensland Branch (AWUQB) welcome the opportunity to provide feedback to the inquiry into the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024*, under consideration by the Health, Environment and Innovation Committee of the Queensland Parliament.

Our Coverage:

The AWUEQ and AWUQB is the nation's oldest and largest blue-collar trade union representing tens of thousands of working men and women and their families. We have a very diverse membership in an array of industries, including but not limited to, public health, private health and aged care with members in these sectors covered by the *Fair Work Act 2009* (private health and aged care - AWUQB members) and the *Industrial Relations Act 2016* (public health – AWUEQ members).

Members employed in these sectors include security officers, wardspersons, kitchenhands, cooks, gardeners, cleaners, anesthetic technicians, personal care workers, lifestyle assistants, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers nurses, and clinical assistants.

The AWUEQ and AWUQB have members who are covered by the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009* (Qld) as well as members working in all health care settings who are not registered health practitioners pursuant to the National Law but are covered by the *Health Ombudsman Act 2013* (Qld).

Our members work across the entire state of Queensland.

As a union representing so many members across Queensland, one of our primary concerns is on the health, safety, and well-being of our members. This importantly includes ensuring that our members are protected from reprisals or other detrimental consequences when raising concerns about the conduct of their co-workers.

Therefore, we strive to proactively support our members as we believe no individual should suffer harm or injury as a direct result of their job and that our members are adequately protected and that their health, safety and well-being is prioritised in all aspects of their employment.

Introduction:

Our members' health, safety and well-being in the workplace will potentially be positively affected by the proposed changes to the Bill that are intended to strengthen protection for notifiers (complainants) against reprisals or other detriment, including from threats and intimidation, harassment or conversion; and for persons who assist regulators during investigations about registered health practitioners.

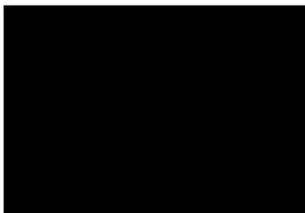
The proposed amendments will provide that it is an offence to threaten, dismiss, refuse to employ, or subject a person to other detriment or reprisal because they intend to or have made a notification or provided assistance to persons performing functions under the National Law.

These amendments are broadly supported by the AWUEQ and AWUQB as these new protections will provide our members with greater confidence to make notifications where they have, in the course of the performance of their workplace duties, formed a reasonable belief that a health practitioner covered by the National Law is engaged in sexual misconduct in a healthcare setting.

The amendment proposed to the *Health Ombudsman Act* to provide the same protections to notifications made about non-registered health practitioners is also broadly supported by the AWUEQ and AWUQB.

By establishing these new protections, all workers in healthcare settings can feel confident that they can raise concerns about sexual misconduct without having their employment detrimentally impacted as a consequence.

The AWUEQ and AWUQB believes that this is a reasonable approach to encourage all workers in healthcare settings to made notifications in a way that affords them appropriate protections from all forms of reprisal or other detriment and therefore contributes to ensuring that the health, safety and well-being of employees working in all healthcare settings.



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