



Speech by

**PHIL REEVES**

**MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD**

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**HEALTH PRACTITIONER REGISTRATION BOARDS (ADMINISTRATION) BILL  
HEALTH PRACTITIONERS (PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS) BILL**

**Mr REEVES** (Mansfield—ALP) (3.52 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to support the Health Practitioner Registration Boards (Administration) Bill. The policy objective of the Bill is to provide responsive administrative and operational support to the health practitioner registration boards. The Bill achieves this objective by establishing an independent statutory body known as the Office of Health Practitioner Registration Boards. The core business of the office will be to provide support services to the registration boards, such as general administrative support including secretarial services, maintaining the boards' registers, and providing and maintaining accommodation and equipment for the use of the boards. Those services will be detailed in the service agreement negotiated with each board.

Currently, administrative and operational support is provided to the boards by a collective secretariat within Queensland Health. The secretariat comprises the registrar of the boards and other staff. All staff are Queensland Health employees. There are no formal service agreements between the boards in Queensland Health that set out the nature and level of support to be provided to the boards through the secretariat. The salaries of the registrar and the secretariat staff are paid by the department and then reimbursed by the boards. The boards share other administrative expenses associated with the secretariat. Those cost sharing and reimbursement arrangements are based on the formula prescribed by the Medical Act and Other Acts (Regulation) 1994.

The new administrative model established by the Bill is a long-overdue response to the concern expressed by many stakeholders, particularly the boards, that the current administrative arrangements are inappropriate and inadequate. Under the current arrangement, the reporting and accountability relationships for the staff servicing the boards are unclear. Although the secretariat staff are department employees, their salaries are ultimately paid for by the boards that they report to on a day-to-day basis.

The boards are locked into an inefficient cost-sharing model based on an inflexible formula that is enshrined in legislation. The formula cannot be varied administratively, which makes it difficult to adjust for administrative arrangements to respond to fluctuations in the level of support required by the individual boards. Most significantly, the current arrangements are inflexible and unresponsive to the boards' needs. Boards lack autonomy in the administrative and staffing decision-making processes. This has compromised the boards' ability to perform their statutory functions.

The new administrative model established by the Bill is designed to address the deficiencies of the current administrative arrangements and to promote the efficient service delivery to the boards. Firstly, the new model facilitates an arm's length relationship between the administration of the boards and Queensland Health. The Bill does this by establishing the Office of Health Practitioner Registration Boards as a Public Service office under the Public Service Act 1996. As such, the office will operate independently of Queensland Health. Secondly, the new administrative model clarifies the reporting and accountability relationship for staff servicing the boards. Under these arrangements, the staff will report directly to the executive officer who, in turn, will report to the boards under the service arrangements negotiated with each board. As with all senior Public Service executives, the executive officer will ultimately be accountable to the Minister for Health.

More importantly, the new administrative arrangements will provide autonomy and flexibility for the boards in staffing and other organisational decision-making processes. Through the mechanism of service agreements, the boards will have a greater ability to negotiate flexible and appropriate staffing and administrative arrangements to meet their particular needs. A board will have the capacity to negotiate the employment of staff to provide professional advice and support to it exclusively, rather than having to rely on shared staff.

Under the new arrangements—and I am sure that the member for Springwood knows this - the executive officer will have the ability to develop and implement appropriate policies and protocols, and to expedite the creation of positions and appointments of staff to service the boards' needs as stipulated under the service agreement. For example, as head of the office, the executive officer will be responsible for deciding organisational and staffing structures and for recruiting staff as and when required by the boards.

The office will comprise an executive officer and staff of the office. The office will be controlled by an executive officer who will be responsible and accountable for ensuring that the office functions efficiently and effectively. The executive officer will have all the powers necessary to ensure that the office delivers its core business, including the power to enter into service agreements with the boards. The position of executive officer will be a Governor in Council appointment under the Bill. The executive officer will not be a Public Service employee. The appointment of the executive officer in this capacity is appropriate, having regard to the breadth and significance of the executive officer's role and responsibilities. The staff of the office will be employed under the Public Service Act 1996 and, therefore, will have status as Public Service employees.

The new administrative arrangements are based on a service agreement model. The function of the office is to provide the administrative and operational support necessary or convenient to help the boards perform their statutory functions. The support services that the office will provide to the boards include: providing general administrative support to the boards; maintaining the boards' registers; collecting moneys payable to the boards; providing and maintaining accommodation and equipment for the boards; providing and arranging the provision of advice, including legal advice, to the boards; helping the boards to meet their statutory financial obligations; and performing other functions conferred on the executive officer or staff or delegated by the boards under the health practitioner registration Acts—for example, inspectorial functions under the Medical Act and Other Acts (Administration) Act or investigating complaints against registrants.

The office will be self-funded by amounts paid by the boards under the service agreements, as the member for Bulimba knows. In practice, the amount paid by the boards will be calculated to take into account the boards' share of office operating costs, salaries and so on of staff who service the boards. As the member for Springwood and the Minister for Environment will agree, it gives me great pleasure to support this Bill. I hope that all members of this House will support it. I congratulate the Minister on bringing it forward.

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