



Speech by

Mr D. BRISKEY

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

Hansard 26 March 2003

HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (4.10 p.m.): It is my great pleasure to rise to speak in support of the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I welcome the amendments, as other speakers have, detailed in this bill—

Mr Neil Roberts interjected.

Mr BRISKEY: I think Michael Dart is an outstanding officer. He has been of great assistance to the member and me over a long period.

I welcome the amendments detailed in the bill and, in particular, I would like to talk briefly about the amendments to the Medical Practitioners Registration Act 2001. These amendments will allow a retired medical professional who obtains non-practising registration to retain the use of their title and refer to their medical qualifications. That is an outstanding amendment.

I want to refer to a letter that was sent to me by Dr Meredith Foxton, now retired. In that letter she stated that she would like to retain the honorific title of 'doctor', even when retired. Further in the letter, Dr Foxton stated—

... Most of us have carried this title for up to fifty years and are known to the people by that title. Other professions and the Services and in this case other States, are pleased to offer to their retired members continuation of their title.

Meredith Foxton—Dr Foxton as we all know her—has practised for many years in the Redlands. There would not be anyone who has lived there for more than five years in the Redlands who would not know Dr Foxton. She is an outstanding professional and I am very, very pleased that the amendments that are contained in this bill will allow her to continue to use that important honorific. We have always known Meredith Foxton by the title 'doctor' and she will continue to be known by the title of 'Dr' Foxton.

The amendments also provide protection from liability for certain bodies or persons who provide information to the Medical Board of Queensland for the purposes of the act. The key amendments in this bill to the Medical Practitioners Registration Act establish the new category of registration called non-practising registration. People who are granted non-practising registration will be permitted to use the courtesy title 'doctor' and refer to the medical qualifications that they hold. However, they will not be allowed to use the titles that are restricted under the act. For example, a retired surgeon will be allowed to use the title 'doctor' and refer to himself or herself as a Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, but would not be permitted to use the restricted titles of 'medical practitioner' or 'surgeon'. A person will be eligible for non-practising registration if the person is, or has been, registered as a medical practitioner and is a suitable person to be a non-practising registrant.

Mrs Lavarch: It is the district manager looking for you, Darryl.

Mr BRISKEY: And what an outstanding district manager he is, too.

Mr Purcell: A retired surgeon, he is. He wants to cut you off.

Mr BRISKEY: This gives me an opportunity to say a quick word about the Redland Hospital, which is an outstanding medical establishment and one that I have been to on many occasions, unfortunately. Also in the area is the Mater Private Hospital, which is a new private

hospital that is co-located with the Redland Hospital and which is doing marvellous work, too, to look after the people of the Redlands. The matters that the Medical Board may consider in deciding on a person's suitability for non-practising registration do not relate to the person's fitness to competently and safely practise medicine but relate only to matters relating to the person's integrity, for example, whether the person has been convicted of an indictable offence.

The standard condition on non-practising registration is that the registrant must not practise. A non-practising registrant who practises would contravene that condition, which would be an offence against the act. Non-practising registration will be available only to practitioners who do not undertake any form of medical practice irrespective of whether any remuneration is received. Semi-retired practitioners who wish to continue to practise in a limited way, for example, by writing prescriptions or referrals for their relatives or friends, will need to maintain their general or specialist registration. This is necessary for the main objective of the act to be achieved, namely, to protect the public by ensuring that health care is delivered by registrants in a professional, safe and confident way.

Currently, all retired or semi-retired doctors can continue to hold general or specialist registration simply by paying their annual registration fee. However, recency of practice requirements will be developed under the act in the near future. These are requirements that, if met, demonstrate that a doctor has maintained an adequate connection with the profession and should continue to hold registration. Recency of practice requirements should be able to be developed in a form that will specify what requirements must be met by doctors who wish to continue to practise in a limited way. For example, semi-retired doctors who intend to write prescriptions or referrals only for family or friends may need to satisfy only some of the recency of practice requirements to maintain registration. The medical profession will be consulted during the development of recency of practice requirements. I am very pleased to welcome the amendments and commend this bill to the House.