



Speech by

**Terry Rogers**

**MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE**

Hansard Wednesday, 24 May 2006

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## **HEALTH QUALITY AND COMPLAINTS COMMISSION BILL**

**Mr ROGERS** (Redcliffe—Lib) (8.53 pm): It is great to see the minister back in the House.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. That is untrue and offensive, and I ask the member to withdraw it. I have been here all night, thank you very much.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Jarratt): Order! There is no point of order but, for the record, the minister has been sitting here all night.

**Mr ROGERS:** I will withdraw.

**Dr Flegg:** You're the one misleading the House.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Moggill, if you have an interjection you might do that through the chair.

**Mr ROGERS:** I rise to speak to the Health Quality and Complaints Commission Bill 2006. Generally, I support this bill as there is a need to reform the health complaints procedures in Queensland. This is in respect of the need to improve the practices of recognising, processing and resolving grievances in Queensland's health system. The bill aims to enhance the management, monitoring and review processes in relation to the health complaints by setting standards and expectations for health service providers to abide by across-the-board. I acknowledge that the proposed commission is being established to replace the current Health Rights Commission in response to recommendations from the Forster review. I also acknowledge the urgency of the commission, as it has been announced by the Premier that the commission will commence operation in July.

However, I do have doubts about some aspects of the bill—in particular, the officials who make up the commission, their power in making standards for health service providers and, from this, the risk of duplicating or overriding existing medical standards which have already been developed for and by medical professionals. My concern with the commission lies in the fact that various commissioners with expertise in law, medicine, nursing and allied health from the public sector are the only side of the health service industry represented. Failure to seek representatives and experience from the private sector will only diminish the commission's effectiveness. In order to be accountable for health service complaints and quality health services from both the public and private health sector, I believe equitable representation is required.

Although the minister on 21 April this year said that the commission was being established 'to provide a fearless independent voice for health consumers in Queensland', this commission fails to provide for health consumers in Queensland as the private sector and private health consumers are not being represented from the top. I also find it contradictory of the minister to claim that the commission will be a voice for health consumers when the one-sided administration of the committee is seen to be, yet again, creating 'jobs for the boys'. This bill gives no guarantee of private sector or regional representation and no true businesspeople or practitioners are being spoken for by this bill.

The development of a code of health rights and responsibilities is expected for consideration by the minister in two years. The government must explain why it is taking so long for it to get serious about fixing our devastated health system. The Beattie Labor government is turning its back on Queensland, making

excuses and delaying progress. Let us get the problems of our health system fixed now, not in two years time. Let us get on with the job and start getting priorities right for Queensland. This legislation is asking health service providers to take complaints seriously. I wish this Labor government would start taking Queenslanders' complaints seriously.

No commission is required to evaluate the concerns of our constituents in relation to the appalling management this government has shown Queensland. Open your ears and start listening to the people of Queensland and realise that our health system needs fixing now. It would be wrong to assume that the health commission on its own would solve the problems revealed in the Forster report. This legislation is just a small step towards fixing our health system. I commend these efforts but would also like to express the urgency and need for the government to get on with the job.

The legislation is driven by the need for a more transparent and updated quality and complaint procedures to deal with a wider array of problems, both systemic and individual. The Forster review has recommended a 'fiercely independent watchdog for both our patients and staff'. I believe this legislation in establishing the commission creates a watchdog but, similar to my concerns with most of Labor's initiatives, how much power should the bureaucrats have? The commission's ability to make standards and oversee health service providers should not be supported by the ability to override established and accepted standards amongst professionals across the industry. The negative impacts of overruling such power would not only cause further disarray within the health service industry but also pull Queensland's suffering health system into the depths of despair.

The commission must adopt the current standards developed for the medical profession by the learned medical colleges. As this legislation aims for the commission only to oversee, monitor, encourage research and investigate, it is important that its role and powers remain within these fields. Overall this legislation selectively implements and interprets the recommendations of the Forster review. The commission does not remove the levels of bureaucracy nor does it encourage or implement processes to resolve problems on the spot.

The coalition is committed to cutting the levels of bureaucracy in Queensland Health, resolving complaints simply at the front line. Not a day goes by when my electorate office is not contacted by frustrated patients or their families, and I agree with the member for Moggill that complaints handling from patients and staff will continue to be the source of anguish despite the introduction of the health commission.