



Speech by

**Hon. Pat Purcell**

**MEMBER FOR BULIMBA**

Hansard Thursday, 24 May 2007

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## **HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Hon. PD PURCELL** (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (5.25 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The Queensland Ambulance Service is recognised as a world leader in the provision of prehospital emergency care and a key reason for that is that the QAS is committed to continual improvement. That is what the amendments to the Ambulance Service Act are all about—improving clinical practice to help provide the people of Queensland with the best possible ambulance service.

This amendment effectively creates a regulatory framework for the conduct of a root cause analysis so that the QAS can continue to improve the delivery of life-saving ambulance services to the Queensland community. RCA is a quality improvement technique that looks at the chain of events responsible for adverse events in order to identify the factors which caused or contributed to the event, as well as the measures that may be implemented to reduce or prevent recurrences of the same type of event. It is a tried and true process and has worked in other high-risk industries, such as the airline industry, to improve systems and processes to reduce risk.

In simple terms, it is all about learning how to do things better and identify means to ensure that adverse events are not repeated. It is widely acknowledged within health and other industry sectors that adverse events rarely have a single cause and that they commonly result from a combination of individual, team, organisational and environmental factors.

The objective of an RCA is to understand how and why an event occurred, rather than to apportion blame or determine liability. When something goes wrong within the Queensland Ambulance Service, we need to learn why so we can prevent it from happening again. This requires the full cooperation of treating paramedics, who could be reluctant to participate due to concerns that the information they provide may later be used against them.

To overcome this problem, the bill provides that information provided to the RCA team can only be used for RCA purposes. It is not a protection from criminal or disciplinary investigations or other legal proceedings. Where a blameworthy act is suspected, existing investigation powers will be used and the root cause analysis will be suspended. While new information produced as a result of the RCA will be privileged, the legislation will not prevent pre-existing information being used as evidence in civil, criminal, coronial or disciplinary proceedings. The final report from such RCAs will be made available to patients and families, affected staff, the Health Quality and Complaints Commission and the coroner.

Importantly, the QAS has a comprehensive implementation plan in place to ensure that staff will be supported and made fully aware of their roles and responsibilities with respect to the RCA. Put simply, RCA is about this government's ongoing commitment to provide the people of this state with the best possible ambulance service, and I commend the bill to the House.