



Speech by

**Peter Lawlor**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT**

Hansard Thursday, 15 November 2007

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## **HEALTH QUALITY AND COMPLAINTS COMMISSION SELECT COMMITTEE**

### **Report**

**Mr LAWLOR** (Southport—ALP) (10.33 am): I lay upon the table of the House the Health Quality and Complaints Commission Select Committee's report, *Review of the Health Quality and Complaints Commission and the Health Quality and Complaints Commission Act 2006*.

*Tabled paper:* Report, dated November 2007, titled 'Review of the Health Quality and Complaints Commission and the Health Quality and Complaints Commission Act 2006'.

The select committee makes 37 recommendations within this report to help improve the operation of the Health Quality and Complaints Commission and the Health Quality and Complaints Commission Act. The select committee believes that the implementation of these recommendations will improve the commission's performance and make it easier for both consumers and providers of health services to interact with the commission.

The main objects of the Health Quality and Complaints Commission Act are to provide for the oversight and review of, and improvement in, the quality of health services and the independent review and management of health complaints. The commission's agenda during its first 12 months of operation has been to establish complaints management processes and introduce standards for health quality and reporting criteria that will help it assess the quality of Queensland's health systems.

The select committee was, on the whole, satisfied with the progress made by the commission in its first year of operation. Throughout the review, the select committee gained the impression that the commission is energised, willing and motivated to improve health quality for all Queenslanders. In this report, the select committee makes a number of observations and recommendations to improve the commission's engagement with consumers and the community as a whole and with the smaller health service provider groups practising throughout Queensland.

The select committee recognises the work the commission has already done to engage providers and other entities about the quality of health services, including the making of standards and quality improvement processes. However, there is some way to go before the commission can say it has successfully engaged all providers and stakeholders on these topics.

The select committee encourages the commission to continue to work towards increasing its profile with providers and stakeholders, including ensuring these individuals and bodies understand the commission's role, functions and powers, their own legislative obligations under the Health Quality and Complaints Commission Act 2006 and, in particular, their obligations in relation to the commission's standards for health quality.

In addition, the select committee encourages the commission to continue to find innovative solutions to enhance the access of consumers. This includes the development of a communication plan and ongoing outreach program, continuing to utilise the expertise of other government agencies and giving

consideration to the employment of an individual with specific expertise in facilitating the access and engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

During this review, the select committee considered the current functions and powers of the Health Quality and Complaints Commission Act and concluded that, in most instances, it is too early to judge the adequacy or otherwise of the act. The select committee highlights in this report the potential issues related to the commission's inability to take disciplinary action against providers or to specifically enforce providers' compliance with its standards. However, in the interests of promoting the commission's quality improvement agenda, the select committee believes that, for the time being, the commission's current functions and powers should be maintained. Instead, the select committee makes a specific recommendation that the commission's functions and powers again be considered in three years time by another parliamentary committee review of the commission.

The select committee hopes that the commission continues to maintain the high level of output and enthusiasm it has so far brought to its role and embrace the opportunity it has been provided to make a real difference in the quality of health services in this state.

On behalf of the Health Quality and Complaints Commission Select Committee, I would like to thank all of the people and organisations who contributed to this review by making submissions, participating as witnesses or attending our public hearings or otherwise sharing with us their views and advice.

I particularly acknowledge the commissioner, chief executive officer and staff of the Health Quality and Complaints Commission who have cooperated readily with the committee during this review. I also thank the committee members and secretariat staff for their efforts throughout the review and in preparing this report for parliament. I commend this report to the House.