




Speech by
Jackie Trad

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

Hansard Wednesday, 20 June 2012

**HEALTH AND HOSPITALS NETWORK AND OTHER LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT BILL AND HEALTH LEGISLATION (HEALTH
PRACTITIONER REGULATION NATIONAL LAW) AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (6.01 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Health and Hospitals Network and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. As indicated by previous speakers on this side of the House, the opposition is generally supportive of this bill as it does not fundamentally change the purpose of the original Health and Hospitals Network Act delivered by the previous Labor government. I do, however, want to place on record a number of concerns I have regarding the bill, including the ill-defined role of the auxiliary boards at clause 19. One of the strengths of public health care on Brisbane's south side is the cooperation and integration across hospitals of various sizes and specialities. There is no doubt that hospitals that work together deliver better health outcomes for their patients. I am concerned that auxiliary boards pose a risk to this cooperation and I assure the House that I will be keeping a close eye on the implementation and impact of these boards. In particular, I will be interested to see the role of boards in relation to the Queensland Children's Hospital, which is currently under construction in South Brisbane. My understanding is that the QCH will be at the centre of a hub-and-spoke service where, for the first time, dedicated paediatric emergency services will be provided at a range of hospitals, including Logan, Redcliffe and the Prince Charles Hospital. I ask the minister to clarify how the board will operate in relation to the children's health services, which will care for children across a range of hospitals.

While on the subject, I want to place on record my very serious concerns about the Newman government's commitment to the future of health and hospitals in Queensland, particularly the Queensland Children's Hospital. My electorate of South Brisbane is lucky enough to be home to a number of Queensland's best public hospitals including the Princess Alexandra Hospital, where my sister is a nurse and my brother-in-law a radiographer. I note that these bills also seek to transfer medical radiology technologists to the national register, and I commend that part of the bill. South Brisbane also houses the Mater Hospital and the Mater Children's Hospital. However, it is the Queensland Children's Hospital to be opened in 2014 that will truly redefine the way we care for the youngest and most vulnerable Queenslanders. The QCH is just one part of Labor's unprecedented investment in health and hospital services, revolutionising children's health services not only for South Brisbane locals but for families in every corner of Queensland. The QCH will be a world-class facility, bringing together and expanding the specialist services currently provided at the Royal Children's Hospital and the Mater Children's Hospital.

The QCH will house 359 beds, a 25 per cent increase from what is currently available at the Royal Children's and Mater Children's hospitals combined. However, the QCH is not just about beds. The hospital will include an additional 12 emergency department treatment bays and a state-of-the-art academic and research facility dedicated to child and adolescent health. For regional families, the QCH will mean greater and improved access to medical care, delivering telemedicine and outreach services to regional hospitals. These services will mean children and young people living in remote parts of

Queensland can gain access to the care they need without having to leave their community, their family or their friends.

In an extraordinary outburst last night, the Treasurer ridiculed the QCH, claiming it is not value for money, stating that it will cost over \$17 million a bed. In this incredible show of ignorance and arrogance, the Treasurer admitted that this government places no value on delivering 21st century health services for Queenslanders and for Queensland children who present with the most complicated and life-threatening conditions imaginable. The Treasurer's calculation attributes no value whatsoever to the extra emergency bays the new hospital will make available. The Treasurer attributes no value to the new cardiac services that QCH will make possible. Not one cent of value does the Treasurer attribute to better cancer care for kids, better research facilities into children's illnesses and better academic and training facilities for the people who treat sick kids. By making the outrageous claim that the QCH brings a price tag of \$17 million per bed, the Treasurer is ignoring the overwhelming benefits that this brand-new family facility will bring to brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers of Queensland's sickest kids.

Those things have no value to the Treasurer because he has ignored them in his calculations. He has ignored that the QCH is delivering extra facilities—facilities to care for newborn children, extra facilities and services to treat children with leukaemia and provide better support for their families. With a \$1.4 billion price tag, the QCH is delivering all of these new, integrated and modernised facilities and services. Yet the Treasurer attributes not one cent of value to them because he comes into this House and uses mean and tricky figures like \$17 million per bed—just like their political mate Costello, mean and tricky. Even if we just look at beds, the \$17 million figure used by the Treasurer comes nowhere close to the actual cost. The truth is the QCH, as I stated previously, will deliver 359 beds at an estimated cost of \$1.4 billion, meaning the cost-per-bed figure is around the \$3.9 million mark.

But even this figure does not reveal the whole truth. It is not \$3.9 million a bed; it is \$3.9 million a room. Indeed, most overnight beds in single rooms at the QCH will come with an ensuite and bed for parents to stay. This means that chronically sick kids—those incredibly brave young people—will not be separated from the people who love them most and the people who know them best, because any parent of a sick child would know that it is little things like being able to hold their hand or share a meal that makes the days go quicker and the wounds heal faster. However, the Treasurer seems to have no empathy or understanding for what these families are going through and continues to dismiss the benefits of the QCH. I suggest that the Treasurer sit down with parents who are caring for sick children and explain to them why he thinks investing in the health of their son or daughter is not money well spent. I suggest that once he does sit with those parents he should never come into this House again and dismiss vital funding for children's health. As someone who has spent quite a lot of time in specialist paediatric hospital settings both here and in Melbourne, I know the value that such a modern, tertiary and integrated facility will bring to Brisbane and Brisbane's sickest kids.

I also want to place on record my thanks, my acknowledgement and my respect for all of the health practitioners from specialist doctors to nurses and to allied health professionals in the hospital setting in Queensland's health system. They do a fantastic job day in, day out. I commend this bill to the House.