




Speech by

Lisa France

MEMBER FOR PUMICESTONE

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

 **Mrs FRANCE** (Pumicestone—LNP) (7.30 pm): Tonight I rise to speak in support of the Health and Hospitals Network and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. The essence of this bill is to provide the framework to ensure Queenslanders again can have faith in their public hospitals and also, and just as importantly, so that our doctors, nurses and auxiliary staff will know they have the level of support they need to ensure the best outcomes for their patients. This bill will provide the mechanism for real change for Queensland's beleaguered health system. One of the key things that Queensland has consistently demanded of its government is transparency and accountability in its health system. This bill will amend the act so we can give Queenslanders what they want: an honest and accountable healthcare system.

Communities have long since lost faith in their local hospitals and service providers. In my electorate, the Caboolture Hospital is struggling to cope with demand after years of being understaffed, underresourced and neglected by the previous government. The doctors, nurses and support staff at the Caboolture Hospital are doing the best they can with the resources they are provided with, but it is not enough to meet the needs of our community. A constituent of mine was originally told there would be a nine-month wait for his prostate cancer surgery at the Caboolture Hospital. Then it became three years. A year later, it is still 'three years'. Is it any wonder the community has lost faith in the hospital and in the health system?

This bill will provide for the establishment of advisory boards, to be called hospital and health ancillary boards, for specific hospitals or areas of the state. It will require each hospital and health board to establish an executive committee to support the board in its role of overseeing the hospital and health service. This bill will give the power back to the communities. They will be asked what they need from their health system, and we will listen to what they say and will deliver. The boards will rely on the advice and knowledge of the people who know what their community needs. It will strengthen community involvement in the running of hospital and health services. We will restore the community's faith in their health service and work together to build a much healthier Queensland.

The hospital and health ancillary boards will oversee the provision of health services in our state. Ancillary boards will be comprised of local community members with the knowledge and expertise to provide advice and support to their local health services. The establishment of health boards is an important step in delivering the health reforms that Queenslanders are so desperate to see. It is not the intention that the boards will be established for every hospital in the state; rather, the bill will target those hospitals and health services that have been underperforming and give those communities a greater say in how their local services should be run. This is a proactive move by the LNP to right the wrongs of the previous government and offer Queenslanders a new and improved health service.

In introducing the bill the minister acknowledged that this will not be a quick fix. Queensland can be assured that it will not see a situation like the payroll debacle that occurred under the previous government.

These will be responsible changes to the health system, carefully discussed and implemented. The health boards will be designed to identify problems and areas of improvement and will work with the hospital and health service and the community to present practical, cost-effective solutions. There will be key issues of critical importance to the community on which consultation will be carried out. Those include issues of service delivery, service planning and design, monitoring and evaluation of service performance.

The government is committed to developing local solutions for local problems. This framework will not be overregulated. Instead, the framework will provide only broad outcomes and regulations, enabling the ancillary boards and communities to identify arrangements to best suit their local needs. We are opening the cupboard of bureaucracy closed by the previous government and we are blowing out the cobwebs. We are firmly committed to delivering a framework for Queensland that allows the funding, so desperately needed, to filter down to where it is needed in the communities rather than getting caught up in the bureaucracy.

As the health boards work to improve all aspects of their service, they will also strive to improve their consultation with the community. As such, each engagement strategy formed by the hospital and health boards will identify ways in which the service will work with the community to improve consultation arrangements. This is in response to the request for greater local empowerment, and I am proud to be part of a government that is delivering what the people want. In some cases, particular consumers and members of the community experience poor health outcomes or have difficulty accessing health services. The amended act will provide solutions to meet the needs of those particular groups.

An important aspect of the new framework is to increase the accountability of services in local communities. To help achieve this goal, decisions made and key issues discussed at the meetings of the board should be made public, subject to any confidentiality and privacy obligations. Our communities need a transparent and accountable health system, and that is exactly what this framework aims to deliver.

In introducing the bill the minister noted that the establishment of hospital and health boards has been a longstanding policy of the LNP. The government is confident that the introduction of ancillary boards within the framework of the broader consumer and community engagement strategies will progressively achieve better health outcomes for our local communities. The boards will help the government target problem services and hospitals, and identify the resources and solutions needed to restore the community's confidence in their local services. Strengthening community engagement is about devolved decision making and, as a result, better health care. Having hospitals and health services in tune with the needs of their communities and consumers can only result in improved services and better health outcomes. By moving away from a prescriptive and overregulating framework, the government is equipping local communities with the tools to develop arrangements to suit their own particular needs. Accountability will improve performance and transparency will lift confidence in our neglected health system.

Less than one month ago I rose in this place to deliver my maiden speech to the House. I had spoken to my constituents and listened to their concerns. I told the House that the people in my electorate of Pumicestone were waiting too long to be seen at Caboolture Hospital and that families had lost faith in a system that leaves them waiting several hours, in the early hours of the morning, with a sick baby to see a doctor. I said that I looked forward to being part of a government that seeks to deliver better health services to my community. This bill is a huge step in the right direction.