




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

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HOSPITAL AND HEALTH BOARDS AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (5.33 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Hospital and Health Boards Amendment Bill 2014. The focus of my very serious concern is for the continued training and education of the junior doctors in the Queensland public health system. For months now, the public has been privy to the health minister's mismanagement of the introduction of contracts for senior medical specialists. His appalling efforts have resulted in a crisis of his own making, with thousands of senior doctors on the verge of resigning from our public health system. I think most people understand the serious ramifications that this may have on existing patient care and health services in our hospitals. But I also want to alert them to the longer term implications of this contracts crisis.

This crisis will also have a massive impact on junior doctors across the state. Junior doctors currently working in our public hospitals must now consider whether they will apply for training positions in Queensland. Why? Because without senior doctors to teach them, their continuing education and accreditation will be catastrophically affected. This adversarial LNP government do not appear to have any grasp of the ramifications of their war on doctors for Queenslanders. Let me explain this so the government can understand their folly.

Supervision by senior doctors of junior doctors is required for two very good reasons: patient safety and the accreditation of training. The impending resignation of senior doctors, including surgeons and anaesthetists, will have a devastating knock-on effect in our hospitals. We will face a dearth of potential junior doctor trainees. Our specialist doctors of the future will not be there when we need them. The Premier has threatened to use doctors who have not been trained in Queensland, and we also know that private providers are quoting day rates of up to \$2,600—plus agency fees—to supply doctors.

These are foolhardy attempts at brinkmanship—to use a word used by the Minister for Health—by the Premier, rather than considered serious negotiations held in good faith. Threats of replacement only serve to inflame the situation. The highly specialised medical professionals who may effect a mass resignation are not so easily replaced, as the health minister claims. They spend years of their lives training in their chosen field, followed by years of vocational training under the supervision of experienced specialists. And, once qualified, they give back to the public health system by providing the required supervision and training for the next generation of junior doctors for their accreditation as specialists.

This war on senior doctors by the Newman government will leave the Queensland public health system broken and the training of future specialists impossible. This war will cause irreparable damage to Queensland's public hospital system from which it will take years to recover, if ever. It is imperative to retain the current specialist doctors and rely on their commitment to train the future medical specialists that Queensland needs. Unfortunately, we have already seen the damage done by getting rid of the experienced nurses across our health system, leaving the more junior nurses coming in without that mentoring and experience behind them.

I can inform the House that recently the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists has been contacted by psychiatry trainees across Queensland, expressing their serious concerns about the implications for their training as a consequence of this war on doctors by the LNP government. Demand for mental health services in the Queensland public health sector is at an all-time high. There are currently 280 psychiatry trainees working in the Queensland public health sector. Their five-year training requirements include frequent meetings and oversight by senior specialists. If this cannot be provided, they will require transfers to where supervision is available—most likely in other states or the private sector. This dire situation extends to all specialists working in our public hospitals. Specifically, I am worried about Redcliffe Hospital, Prince Charles Hospital, Caboolture Hospital and the Royal Women's and Children Hospital.

The member for Bundamba has called on numerous members of this House to stand up and support their local hospitals. I certainly call on those local members for those hospitals to stand up and support the amendments tabled by the member for Bundamba if they actually have the interests of the senior medical officers in mind.

Government members interjected.

Ms D'ATH: They can turn this into a big joke, but this is a serious matter. This is a crisis for our health system, a crisis that this government does not want to acknowledge exists. The Premier and his health minister's complete ignorance of the downstream effects on our hospital system is appalling. There is no plan—just blind stubbornness. Long after Queenslanders have relegated this hopeless rabble to a footnote in history, the implications of this war on doctors will still reverberate through our once world-class health system. I would like to end my contribution to this bill quoting a local resident in the electorate of Redcliffe who states—

Who am I

In October 2013 the Queensland Attorney General tabled legislation in parliament the effect of which has been to deny me personally of a number of rights and protections afforded to other members of the Queensland community. The statute enables my employment to be proscribed by others without my consent, and denies my right of access to independent binding arbitration. The political justification for the imposition of these draconian measures is that a few individuals, with whom I maybe associated with, have allegedly been engaged in fraudulent and criminal activity. I am not entitled to openly or freely discuss issues that of public concern without fear of retribution. My rights of association are constrained by law. I am being threatened by an executive arm of the government to sign legal binding document agreeing to abide the imposed conditions or otherwise be "fined" and face financial penalty. I have broken no law.

Who am I—I am not a bikie—I am a public hospital specialist doctor.

I heard the Minister for Health scoff at those comments, but this is one of his own specialist medical officers in the Queensland system and these are his views and his concerns and they should not be dismissed so readily by the health minister. It is in the best interests of this specialist medical officer and the medical officers across Queensland and it is in the best interests of my local community that I will be opposing the Hospital and Health Boards Amendment Bill 2014 tabled by the Minister for Health and I will be supporting those amendments tabled by the member for Bundamba.