




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Mental Health Act Review

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (10.12 am): Nearly half of all Australians will experience a mental health disorder at some stage in their lives. It is important that Queensland's mental health services and policies are the best that they can be. That is why the Palaszczuk government has invited Queenslanders to help shape the state's mental health system as part of a broad-ranging consultation on a new Mental Health Act.

The Mental Health Act is a very complex and powerful act and has serious implications for the rights, liberties and obligations of Queenslanders who may have a mental illness. We owe it to these people to get it right. That is why this government has listened to the community, which clearly said that the LNP's previous attempt to deliver a new Mental Health Act was not good enough. Their attempt failed for several reasons, but it all comes from one thing: the unseemly rush by the member for Southern Downs to get legislation passed before the parliament was dissolved.

This created a whole series of problems: firstly, I am advised that no-one outside of the then government—no-one—saw the LNP's bill in its final form until it was introduced into the parliament; secondly, the preparation of the previous bill was rushed and it was riddled with technical errors and drafting mistakes; thirdly, it overlooked key policy areas, including the proper regulation of physical restraints and medication of those who are mentally ill; and fourthly, the LNP failed to fix their past policy mistakes like GPS monitoring.

Last weekend I announced the government's new approach to reforming the Mental Health Act. We are going to get this right for Queenslanders through proper consultation, fixing the LNP's policy mistakes and addressing areas that were overlooked. Firstly, we have released an exposure draft. This will allow stakeholders and, in fact, all Queenslanders to see the bill in its entirety and give feedback on the provisions. For something as big, as complex and as far-reaching as the Mental Health Act, an exposure draft is the right approach. In an area where human rights are deeply affected, you should not simply rush a 500-page bill into the parliament without showing it to people first.

Importantly, the government's draft bill reallocates the power to require a forensic patient to wear a GPS tracking device to independent judicial bodies, thus taking this power away from the director of mental health where it currently sits. Our bill creates new provisions to regulate the use of physical restraints and the appropriate clinical use of medication.

The government is also getting on with the job of service delivery and delivering on our election commitments. On 21 April I was pleased to be in Townsville to announce the commissioning of new youth residential rehabilitation facilities for North Queensland, which was a promise made by Labor at the last election. On that important occasion I was joined by the member for Thuringowa, who has been highly supportive of this initiative, along with the member for Mundingburra and the member for

Townsville. The Palaszczuk Labor government will establish two youth residential rehabilitation facilities which will support up to eight young people living with a serious mental illness. These facilities are not for people who require acute care—who will continue to be cared for in hospitals—but for people still finding their way back into the world after treatment. They will either be working, looking for work or studying, and they will have support to help them back into the world in a setting that is closer to their families, friends and support networks. This is good news and a good service for young North Queenslanders, and I was pleased to be able to deliver on Labor's initiative.

I am determined to improve Queensland's mental health system. As I said at the outset, nearly half of the Australian population will suffer some form of mental illness in their lifetime. Our commitment as a government is to provide the best possible support and treatment for those who need it.