




Speech By  
**Christopher Whiting**

**MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA**

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Record of Proceedings, 24 February 2016

**HEALTH LEGISLATION (WAITING LIST INTEGRITY) AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr WHITING** (Murrumbidgee—ALP) (9.53 pm): I also rise to oppose the bill before the House tonight. After listening to the speeches from members on this side of the House, it is clear that this bill delivers more red tape. It is clear that it doubles the administrative workload for Queensland Health staff. We have heard that from the member for Greenslopes. We have heard about the pointless duplication that it would engender. It seems to me that it is a case of reporting back for reporting back's sake. It is also clear that it is going to make someone feel better, but not the patients. It will make the proponents feel better about themselves.

I wish to describe some of the things included in the bill. The explanatory notes refer to things such as establishing the Health Ombudsman as an independent reviewer of clinical waiting times; the Health Ombudsman manages auditing of wait-time matters; provides certainty in clinical waiting times; publishes waiting time data; sets out its functions and powers; provides waiting time data to the ombudsman; analyses and publishes the data in a timely manner on the number of patients of each hospital and health service—

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Farmer): Order! I ask members to keep the conversation to a minimum. It is getting late, but it is getting harder to hear the speakers.

**Mr WHITING:** It refers to the data on the number of patients of a hospital and health service waiting for longer than two years for general dental care. After reading that, it is clear that the legislation would double their workload. As the member for Thuringowa said, they are already doing this. This information is already published. It is doubling the workload of an already hardworking staff. As the minister said, patients get nothing out of this. It will take time and resources away from the front line of health service delivery.

When reading this legislation I thought this will mean nothing to those people who spend hours and hours in our Queensland hospitals after hours. I think specifically of the time that I spent in Caboolture Hospital with my own father. I will talk briefly about what he went through. He was a healthy man. He was an incredible sportsman who played baseball for Queensland. He picked up smoking in the Army. They gave out free cigarettes at that time and he developed a habit that led to 50 years worth of smoking. When he retired, his health collapsed in a spectacular way. One day he had a stroke mowing and then the skin cancer was discovered. He was only 72. His carotid arteries were shot. He had to have a pacemaker put in. Then they discovered he had emphysema, as well as osteoporosis. In the end, it was bladder cancer that got him. It is a very common ailment with smokers. Towards the end he lived with us and I remember helping him wash and just looking after him. My mother says one of her most enduring memories is, in the last few days, picking him up as if he were a small child or a bundle of sticks and taking him to hospital. Eventually he died in a nursing hospital, in a strange place, holding the hand of a kind stranger. I commend the government for passing the bill last night. I believe we need to push smoking out of all public spaces.

My point is that this bill would not have meant that much for my father. We spent hours and hours after hours on Saturday nights in Caboolture Hospital. He said that he knew the people there were trying their hardest. He knew that they needed more people at the front line. He would say, 'We need more people here.' At the end of the day, if asked whether this bill would have improved his health care, I would answer no. We were at Caboolture Hospital, one of Queensland's finest hospitals, as the member for Morayfield and the minister have said, but their emergency department services a vast number of working Queenslanders. To go into Caboolture Hospital on a Saturday night is to be in a very busy place. Therefore, I would say that if we want to improve health services to Queensland we build up the front line, as the Labor Party is doing.

I believe that only Labor has the really intense and true focus on building up the front line in health care. I wish to look at Labor's actions since coming back to government, especially in the area of reducing wait-time lists. In our first budget—and members have already heard this tonight—we provided additional funding of \$361.2 million over four years to tackle the significant number of specialist outpatient long waits. In March last year, we announced an extra \$30 million in funding which has developed more than 10,000 additional specialist outpatient appointments.

We have heard today a number of times that when we came to government we discovered that more than 100,000 Queenslanders had been waiting longer than the clinically recommended time for a specialist outpatient appointment. In April and October last year the Minister for Health—and I commend him for this—convened wait-time summits to bring together health professionals.

I reflect on the history in this area. I look around at all the major hospitals in Brisbane and throughout Queensland that have been built in the last 20 years, most predominantly under Labor. I look at how the RBWH has been redeveloped. I look at the Prince Charles and the PA as well. The Caboolture Hospital redevelopment was brought forward under a Labor government. I believe we have the strongest record on that. Reading through the bill it became very clear to me—

**Mr Rickuss** interjected.

**Mr WHITING:** We can talk about the LNP's wrong priorities. I did read the member for Caloundra's speech on this bill. Let us have a look at what he said in that speech.