




Speech By  
**Deb Frecklington**

**MEMBER FOR NANANGO**

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**MENTAL HEALTH BILL; MENTAL HEALTH (RECOVERY MODEL) BILL**

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (5.06 pm): I rise to join this cognate debate on the Mental Health (Recovery Model) Bill 2015 and the Mental Health Bill 2015. First of all, I would like to thank the shadow minister for health, Mark McArdle, and also the previous minister for health, the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Lawrence Springborg, for the hard work that they have put into the preparation of this bill. I acknowledge the hard work of the previous health minister, who originally brought this legislation before the House. I also would like to thank the committee members, which was just acknowledged in this debate, for their really hard deliberations. I note particularly that the member for Mudgeeraba, with her clinical experience, has made a great contribution to this debate and that we have had several conversations on this issue.

I rise in the House to contribute to this debate, because mental health is such an important issue and it is about time that we did something about it. This bill certainly goes towards reviewing how the issue of mental health is regarded in this state. Anyone who has heard me speak in this House about the issue of mental health would know that I am extremely passionate about it. It is an issue that encouraged me not only to consider politics in the first place but also to remain here.

Mental health is not a political issue and it should not be used in the way in which the member for Springwood did in this House. He made disgusting, political, vitriolic comments about an issue that should be approached in a bipartisan manner. Although there may be slight differences in the two bills that we are debating here tonight, I put it to the members of this House that the LNP introduced the original bill. On behalf of the members on this side of the House, I take great offence to the comments that the member for Springwood made about the treatment of mental health when the LNP was in government.

As far back as my maiden speech in 2012, I have talked about the issue of mental health in rural and regional areas, and specifically the growing number of suicides that have occurred in and around the South Burnett. I have been determined to not only raise the issue of mental health but also try to change these alarming statistics. That is why I simply cannot let this issue be politicised. I cannot let someone in this House talk that way about the LNP government's handling of mental health issues. On behalf of those on this side of the House who actually know something about people who are suffering from mental health issues, I say that it is a sad day in Queensland politics when we have to sit here and listen to that vitriol. I am extremely disappointed that the hard work of the shadow minister, Mark McArdle, has been politicised to such a low grade.

The bills before the House are similar in their intent. They set out to improve and maintain the health and wellbeing of people with a mental illness. Those on this side of the House find that very important. That is why the shadow minister for health has spent so much time and effort bringing this bill before the House. It aims to offer effective and contemporary legislation to help Queenslanders who suffer from mental illness. The objectives of our bill are to be achieved in a way that safeguards the rights of people and affects a person's rights and liberties in an adverse way only if there is no less

restrictive way to protect the health and safety of the person or others. Importantly, the bill promotes a person's recovery and the ability for that person to live in our community without the need for involuntary treatment or care.

Underpinning the bill is the principle that a person who does not have the capacity to consent to treatment may be at risk of harm or deterioration of his or her health with no ability to make decisions to avert these adverse consequences. The bill therefore establishes legislative arrangements for treatment without consent. The LNP's bill is a comprehensive and detailed document developed over a period of time, with consultation periods, meetings and workshops across all parts of this great state, including regional Queensland. These bills cover many areas but I would just like to touch on a few. One issue that goes to the heart of the matter for me is in relation to the role of ambulance and police officers in the assistance of people in an emergency mental illness situation. I commenced, with several other hardworking people, the South Burnett Suicide Prevention Group in Kingaroy because of this exact issue. Our police officers were constantly having to assist our hospital staff and ambulance officers whilst people were in quite serious stages of a situation either when they had to be taken to the hospital or had to be transported from Kingaroy to another facility in Toowoomba, for example. It is these front-line people who we really need to look out for. We need to listen to their stories and help them in their job. It is hard work. These people are helping people in a mental health emergency situation. Not only do we need to help the people in our hospitals but these front-line workers need assistance. That is why I was so offended when I had to sit here and listen to the member for Springwood talk about what we thought about mental health. I think it is offensive.

I conclude by saying that I am pleased that the issue of mental health legislation is being examined and improved. It is long overdue. But we have a long way to go—all over Australia—to assist in relation to the issue of mental health particularly in rural and regional areas. I for one will continue, whilst ever I have the honour of being in this House, to promote the seriousness and the effects of mental health on our rural and regional people in particular given the extreme circumstances that some of our rural and regional constituents find themselves in, be that emergency situations—for example, in the case of people up and down the coast last year around Yeppoon—some of our great friends who are suffering in drought conditions or my friends around Aramac. It was great to be in Longreach last Thursday with Lachlan Millar, the member for Gregory, who I know is also extremely passionate about raising the profile of the issue of rural and regional mental health. If there is nothing else that we do in this House, we must continue the advocacy to support people who suffer, to raise the profile, take away the stigma and stop politicising this issue.