




Speech By
Julianne Gilbert

MEMBER FOR MACKAY

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HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (4.19 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate of the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This is an important bill amending the Criminal Code and three health portfolio acts. The bill amends the Criminal Code to standardise the age of consent for sexual intercourse to 16 years and replace references to ‘sodomy’ with ‘anal intercourse’. It amends the Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011 to facilitate general practitioners having access to the Queensland Health database, the Viewer, and to enable more efficient disclosure of confidential patient information for research purposes. It amends the Public Health Act 2005 to allow information relating to deceased patients to be disclosed for research purposes; enable schools to share student information with school immunisation and oral health service providers to improve the uptake of the School Immunisation Program and school dental program; and make consequential amendments to reflect changes to the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register. It also amends the Queensland Institute of Medical Research Act 1945 to facilitate the payment of bonuses to successful discoverers or inventors.

For a patient to get the best possible care it is important for GPs to have timely information about history of care. The Viewer, a read-only database, enables GPs, with the consent of the patient, to access quickly a picture of a patient’s medical care to ensure the best possible ongoing health care. Records are treated with confidentiality, as defined in part 7. It is important to have a coordinated approach to health care for the best possible outcome for patients. Patients who are worried about privacy can opt out of the system.

I know how important it is for doctors to have a holistic picture of a patient’s health history. When elderly family members come for holidays, sometimes they forget to bring their medication and you need to take them to a GP to help them access their medication. They cannot always remember what the medication is, so GPs having access to their records will be very helpful. At times I have had to access a GP who is not my local GP when I have been away from home or travelling with children. In those instances it would have been very handy for my and my family’s records to be able to be pulled up.

Preventative health measures are the best for the community. Having students immunised through the School Immunisation Program and accessing the school dental program will save some of our students from more serious health issues later in life. The School Immunisation Program is below its target of 85 per cent coverage for Queensland adolescents, and the uptake of oral care services is declining. Students are not returning their permission notes. This bill will require principals to provide to school health providers information prescribed by regulation when required.

This bill standardises the age of consent. It will bring an end to one of the state's most discriminatory laws. This bill sets a minimum age of consent of 16 years for all sexual activity. The current laws discriminate against young same-sex attracted men under 18 years. An expert panel was consulted on changes to the Criminal Code. They advised we remove the disparity in the age of consent for different sexual activity.

The Queensland Sexual Health Strategy 2016-2021 was released for public consultation on 25 May 2016. It aims to support health and safe sexual experience based on respect and consent and to provide Queenslanders with the knowledge required to maintain optimal sexual and reproductive health. The changes will enable young people in same-sex relationships to seek appropriate medical treatment and sexual health information without stigmatising their relationships.

Sixteen-year-olds are becoming young adults. They are in a transitional period of their lives, bringing up issues of independence and self-identity. They face tough choices regarding schoolwork, sexuality, drugs, alcohol and social life. Young people realising that they are same-sex attracted need society to be non-judgemental and positive.

A key action from the Sexual Health Strategy is to improve sexual health outcomes for specific population groups including reducing barriers to testing and treatment. For sexually active young people and those who identify as same-sex and gender questioning, this is a great thing. I commend the bill to the House.