




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BROADWATER

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HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Miss BARTON** (Broadwater—LNP) (5.06 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I do not intend to canvass all of the policy objectives that are covered in this bill, but there are a couple that I particularly want to speak to. I want to talk about some of the changes that are being made to ensure that children in Queensland schools will be able to access immunisation. I am sure that all members of this House are particularly cognisant of the fact that it is incredibly important for the safety of all children, whether they are young children or older children, that we maintain a particular level of immunisation to ensure the health and wellbeing of all Queenslanders. Even though I might not yet have children, I am aware—as I am sure we all are—that not all kids are very good at remembering to give their mother or father the form or, if they have and their parents have signed it, they are not always very good at returning it to school. The changes that we see in this particular legislation will go a long way to ensuring that parents are able to make informed decisions about what happens with respect to their child's immunisation and that parents are able to make a conscious decision to allow immunisation of their child within the school environment.

As I said, we all know just how critically important immunisation is. The member for Capalaba spoke about some of the diseases that we have seen effectively disappear off our radar in Australia as a result of the work that has been done, in terms of not only research and vaccines but also maintaining levels of immunisation.

I put on the record my appreciation to the Rotary club of Runaway Bay. Every year on the Gold Coast we hold a symposium for local health professionals with respect to early psychosis. The other day as we were hosting our symposium, which was on youth suicide, we also ran an awareness and fundraising program as part of Rotary International's Purple Pinkie for Polio campaign. We encouraged people to make a gold coin donation and have their pinkie painted purple so that we can provide vaccinations for children in Afghanistan and Pakistan. When we think about the significant changes that are being made to the lives of children, not only across this country but also across the world because of the work that is being done, not only in the research space but also in terms of increasing the numbers of people who are being vaccinated, it is really quite amazing. I particularly acknowledge the new president, Eric Lewis, for the work that he has done to raise awareness in this space.

I also wanted to touch on the changes with respect to dental care and oral health in the same vein as immunisation in terms of the ability of providers in schools to contact parents directly and have discussions about this issue with the parents. The shadow minister for health has touched on this. He has a professional knowledge about how important oral health is.

The reality is that oral health is important not just in terms of the health of one's teeth and mouth but the wellbeing of the whole person. It not only impacts people's blood pressure and results in other diseases but also impacts people's self-esteem and mental health. One of the things that we are all very conscious of is the need to ensure that teenagers and young children particularly are comfortable

with whom they are. Maintaining good oral health goes a long way towards that. I have no doubt that, in the same vein as the work that is being done around encouraging and supporting immunisation, we will see an uptake in the number of people who are participating in oral health programs that are run within our schools.

There are also some changes with respect to the research that is being done. I do not think anyone could doubt that there is an amazing depth and breadth of research being done with respect to new and emerging diseases and also in terms of the way that we treat disease that we may not have always understood.

I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Currumbin when speaking about her father. I know that he was a very dear man and she was very close to him. I too have seen someone that I love change before my eyes. My grandfather suffered from dementia. In the last two years of his life the person that we all knew and loved had started to change. It is really heartbreaking.

As we make it easier for people to conduct vital research in a range of areas, what we will hopefully see is a better future for others. This is in the same vein as the changes we made last night with respect to mandatory reporting. It may not help my family and it may not help the member for Currumbin, but I am sure it gives us both comfort to know that we are encouraging and supporting really innovative medical researchers in the great work that they are doing. We hope that we can help other families so that they do not have to feel the devastation that I am sure the member for Currumbin felt and that I know I felt and my grandmother and my mother and her brothers felt.

I will briefly touch on the changes with respect to GPs accessing information about their patients through the Queensland Health Viewer database. What we will ultimately see is better outcomes for patients. As someone who is not a medical professional, one does not always know what it is that one needs to tell one's GP about what has been done, say, in hospital or with another doctor. Some vital information could be left out about a test that was conducted when someone was in hospital two weeks before. The results of those tests and the changes that need to be made to medication could ultimately be very critical to someone's life.

Through the increased capacity for GPs to access data about their own patients I think we can ultimately all take comfort in the knowledge that that will result in improved outcomes for patients, which is what it is all about. Critically, for patients it will mean that there is not a duplication of tests. Whilst some people might feel very comfortable with blood tests and other tests, the reality is that not everyone is very comfortable with medical procedures. For an older person or someone who has a phobia of needles or confined spaces it might be very distressing for them to have medical tests duplicated. Increased access and better communication between GPs and other medical professionals hopefully will ultimately result in improved outcomes for patients, which can only be a good thing.

I acknowledge the work that was done by the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee in its consideration of this bill. I know that the members of this committee are incredibly diligent in the work that they do. They are conscious of understanding the broader issues. The deputy chair, the member for Coomera, is a big fan of ensuring that the evidence is listened to, as he has said many times in this House. I am sure members of the government would remember that every time he makes a contribution he mentions his great commitment not only to the committee process but also to the evidence that those committees consider.

I note that all six members of this committee worked diligently in their consideration of the issues. I acknowledge those who took the time to make submissions. I also acknowledge the secretariat for the work they did.