




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

Record of Proceedings, 6 September 2017

**HEALTH PRACTITIONER REGULATION NATIONAL LAW AND OTHER
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (5.20 pm), in reply: I was very pleased to participate in this debate this afternoon and I acknowledge the contributions of all members of the House. I thank the shadow minister and the LNP for their support for this important legislation. One of the pleasing aspects of the debate was that the lawyers in the debate were massively outnumbered by the former health professionals who spoke on the bill. I acknowledge the member for Surfers Paradise, a registered but now not practising dentist—I am sure he would like to have a go at me at some stage, perhaps without anaesthetic, but we will have to wait until our parliamentary careers are over for that. I acknowledge the member for Gaven, who has worked in a communications centre in an ambulance service. On the government's side I acknowledge the member for Greenslopes, who is a registered nurse and continues to maintain the currency of his practice through appropriate clinical time; as well as, very importantly, the member for Thuringowa, who served for 27 years as a paramedic and is now an honorary paramedic in Townsville; and also the member for Barron River, who also spoke at length about his service as a paramedic. I think it speaks highly of our parliament that we have such highly regarded professions now represented in the parliament through those members of parliament. Sadly for the members for Thuringowa, Barron River and Greenslopes they have gone from the highest regarded profession to a profession just underneath those professions being members of the Queensland parliament. We are all privileged to serve in this House from wherever we come from and I think it is wonderful that we have so many health practitioners who have worked in that area now contributing to this legislation.

I again acknowledge the service of paramedics to our state. We have heard from all members about the great contribution they make to Queensland. I reflected on my experience as the Minister for Ambulance Services. I think I am the first minister in Queensland to hold that specific title: not just the Minister for Health but a designated ministerial title as the Minister for Ambulance Services and I am very proud to serve in that capacity. I know the sacrifices that hardworking ambulance officers and paramedics make to attend emergencies day and night. We often take for granted the work they do, but we feel a great sense of comfort and relief when paramedics are on scene with us. When they respond to a call there is a visible sense of relief from all of us who have had that experience, who have experienced the kind, calm but highly professional way that paramedics engage in health responses, often very serious critical responses that are required, and I want to express my thanks to them.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to thank you as the chair of the committee for the work of your committee in guiding the bill through the committee. I thank you for the detailed consideration of those matters. I addressed that at the beginning of the second reading speech. I also want to address some of the issues that were raised in response, notably by the member for Caloundra, in relation to emergency department performance. I do not really want to go on at length, but it was raised in the debate and I do want to address that. Before I turn to that, I want to address the matter of occupational violence that the member for Surfers Paradise raised. Our government takes that matter very seriously.

We set up a dedicated task force not only for paramedics but for all health workers in Queensland. The Paramedic Safety Taskforce made 15 recommendations. We have implemented them all. We will continue to monitor this both for paramedics and also for health workers across Queensland. There is no excuse for abuse of any form, physical or verbal, against any health worker in the state. Our government has taken steps to implement significant, often landmark, reforms in this area. The truth of the matter is there was no action for three years under the Newman LNP government and the problem continued to grow. Not only have we taken steps; we have made it very clear to our staff that it is unacceptable. I anticipate there will be more reporting of violence and abuse against staff because we are encouraging them to report. It is the only way we can address that issue.

In response to the member for Caloundra, demands on emergency departments and ambulances is at an all-time high, as reported a few weeks ago. The single busiest day in the 125-year history of the Queensland Ambulance Service and its predecessor organisation occurred a couple of weeks ago. The QAS is now attending 86,000 incidents a month—15 per cent more every month than when the LNP was in power. Our major emergency departments are seeing 74,000 presentations each month—12,000 more every month than was occurring under the LNP: a 20 per cent increase. We have increased funding to the Ambulance Service by \$80 million since we came to power. We have increased ambulance officers and staff members rebuilding the front line by 225. Category 2 presentations are up. NEAT times—our emergency access time—is expected to be 76 per cent in 2016-17. Notwithstanding this very significant increase in demand, it is equal to the best ever result achieved by the LNP.

I say to the member for Caloundra, let us not tear down paramedics and our emergency staff as he seeks to do. Let us support them across Queensland. I thank all members of the House for their contribution. This is an important day in the history of our Ambulance Service and the future professionalisation of our paramedics in this state.