




Speech By
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PUBLIC HEALTH (INFECTION CONTROL) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (5.11 pm): I rise in support of the Public Health (Infection Control) Amendment Bill. I start by thanking the committee and submitters for the good work they have done in relation to this matter. This bill was generated in response to an infection control issue in a dental clinic not terribly far from the electorate that I represent. I thank and congratulate the minister and the department for their speedy response to that initiating issue. While it was good that they dealt with the immediate issue, it is better that they have looked at the issue and brought legislation into the House very quickly.

I start by reassuring the community that healthcare professionals—dentists, nurses, doctors, allied health professionals—all take infection control extremely seriously. Perhaps the best protection that patients have is the very high ethical standards that all of those people operate by. In my last job as a nurse before being elected I worked at QEII Hospital. I was a hand hygiene hero. This was a role that involved a significant amount of training. It involved—

Mr Dick: It's very important.

Mr KELLY: A very important role. If people speak to anybody in health care they will tell them that the No. 1 intervention that has saved more lives in the history of health care than anything else is good hand washing. It was a role that I certainly took very seriously. It was a role that demonstrated to me that all sections of the healthcare community, including those people who are not working as professionals but who work in support roles, take this matter very seriously.

For health professionals there are key things that drive our practice in this area. Our practice is guided by evidence and it is adjusted and updated constantly. As I have already noted, the very high ethical standards that all health practitioners operate by guide what we do on a day-to-day basis. While legislative frameworks are certainly essential—and we need to make sure that there are guidelines, inspections and enforcement—ultimately what drives most healthcare professionals to do the right thing all the time is their ethical code.

The final thing that drives most healthcare professionals—it certainly drove me and all of the professionals that I worked with—is a deep sense of care and responsibility for patients. Healthcare professionals have all seen the impacts of infectious disease. We know that with good procedures we can limit or prevent most infectious diseases. I certainly pay tribute to all the nurses and doctors who specialise in infection control. They do not just work in our hospitals; they work right across healthcare facilities. They are people who often do not get much recognition. I can certainly tell members that from the perspective of practising nurses we would not have been able to do our jobs effectively and keep patients safe and prevent the spread of some truly serious illnesses without their good work.

Today representatives from Engineers Australia were in the House for their annual visit. I had a chat to some of the engineers. They were half joking about health engineering when they found out my background. The reality is that some of the most significant changes that have led to the greatest health

benefits in our society have probably had as much to do with engineering as they have had to do with healthcare professionals. Things like the delivery of clean water and a capacity to have good sanitation practices in our crowded cities has led to an absolute reduction in infectious diseases.

I want to stress and reassure the community that our infection control frameworks for healthcare facilities in this state are good. What this bill will do is make them stronger. Public health officials will have greater powers to investigate potential breaches in a much faster manner and take enforcement action more quickly.

This bill is sensible. It makes our strong infection control processes even stronger. I have no doubt that this bill will be supported by a majority of healthcare professionals. I commend this bill to the House.