




Speech By  
**Lachlan Millar**

**MEMBER FOR GREGORY**

---

Record of Proceedings, 23 May 2017

### **PUBLIC HEALTH (INFECTION CONTROL) AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (5.32 pm): I would like to make a short contribution to the Public Health (Infection Control) Amendment Bill 2016. Before I do that I would like to acknowledge the great work that our health professionals in regional Queensland do—from doctors, nurses, ambulance and allied health right down to cleaners and security at our hospitals and healthcare facilities. They do such a fantastic job and an important job for western and regional Queensland. We are fortunate to have some pretty good health boards in the region such as the central west health board led by Jane Williams, who does a fantastic job making sure that we are able to provide the best health care we can in Western Queensland.

Infection control is probably one of the most important jobs in our health system. I know firsthand the importance that our health professionals put on infection control and what they do to maintain the right procedures in hospitals and health clinics to make sure infection control is a priority when it comes to the workplace. It is important. It is the simple things that need to be done and followed through to make sure we control infection in hospitals. We have all heard the stories where infections do get out of control in some areas. It is the simple things that help such as washing hands and making sure that those hospitals are an hygienic place. The staff do a wonderful job from doctors, nurses, professionals and ambulance right down to the cleaners. They do a fantastic job.

The need for this bill came about when Queensland Health in conjunction with the Brisbane City Council closed a Brisbane dental clinic in Carina in 2016. The concern and the closure stemmed from poor sterilisation practices, and the dentist in charge of the clinic was also suspended at the time. I do note that the Chief Health Officer, Dr Jeannette Young, said procedures at the clinic were inadequate. The clinic was subsequently found to have exposed more than 4,000 patients to a potential hepatitis C infection due to poor infection and management practices. When we go to a dentist, a hospital or a clinic, we do expect that it is clean and that everything is done right. It is important that this legislation comes before the House and is dealt with. We have to make sure that we maintain the highest standards in all our health clinics right around Queensland. Whether it is here in Brisbane, in Cape York or Western Queensland, that is very important.

The first part of this bill will make changes to further enable guidance to be provided to the operators and staff at healthcare facilities to minimise infection risk, which is important. The bill also allows for appropriate adjustments to be made to the regulation-making head of power in the act supported by amendments to the Public Health Regulation 2005 that will allow for mandatory training, competency and infection control standards to be prescribed by regulation. The second part of the bill will expand on the ability for the Department of Health to monitor compliance by operators and staff at the HCFs with their infection control obligations and, where necessary, investigate possible breaches. Heads of power will also be inserted into the framework to allow Queensland Health to require the operator of the HCF to produce a copy of their infection control management plan or to amend their infection control management plan. An authorised person will be empowered to enter premises to

investigate infection risks without prior notice. A third part of the bill will increase the power of Queensland Health to enforce compliance by the operators and staff of the HCF with the infection control framework and to prosecute breaches.

It is vitally important that we have these regulations in regional Queensland and make sure we do have compliance. The bill imposes penalties for noncompliance, which is important. It enables Queensland Health to direct the operator of a HCF to take particular corrective actions or to cease performing a particular health service where that service involves a risk to public health from poor infection control practices.

I also note that the Australian Dental Association in Queensland has concerns about proposed changes as the issues that need to be addressed with regard to infection control standards will be prescribed by a yet-unseen regulation. The association is not convinced and it remains to be seen what these provisions are. The association is concerned about the resourcing of the appropriately qualified person for these tasks. The proposed changes would amount to conflicting regulations between the association and its Queensland notification board.

An issue that is important—and I know that the member for Surfers Paradise, a dentist himself, will be moving some amendments with regard to this—is that if there is going to be a power exercised by a senior person in Queensland Health, there needs to be a right of appeal to have that decision reviewed because of the catastrophic effects a direction notice can have, which can result in the closure of a practice. Why is that important in regional Queensland where I come from? It is incredibly important because sometimes that is the only practice or service in town. We need to make sure that those services in regional Queensland are protected and continue to operate if they feel they need to appeal. Presently the Public Health Act 2005 does not have any right to review beyond application to the Supreme Court, which is expensive for affected registrants and can be very time consuming. It is very important for people in regional Queensland and Western Queensland and those practices to have the right to appeal. If they feel they have been hard done by and that they need to continue to operate and they are conducting a safe practice and are on top of their infection control, they need to be able to appeal. I think that is very important.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to the dentists and health professionals in Western Queensland and especially services like the dental van, which operates in regional Queensland. This van—

**Ms Leahy:** It is critical.

**Mr MILLAR:**—is critical and it goes around regional areas. It is sponsored by QCoal, and it is through their generosity that the van continues to operate. I have seen it firsthand operating in regions in the electorate of Gregory such as Winton. It just turns up in a town and provides high-class professional dental services to those towns in Western Queensland. I think they do a marvellous job, very much like the Heart of Australia truck. They put critical clinical operations in those small towns and allow people, whether they live in Stonehenge, Jundah, Winton or Clermont, to have access to first-class health facilities. I commend the dental van for what they do; they do a fantastic job.

It is great to see some of those dentists who come out from Brisbane and the city. They get a great experience of Western Queensland life. Not only are they providing a first-class and much needed service in western and regional Queensland but it also gives them an opportunity to get around the state and see that Queensland is bigger than just Brisbane. It is a wonderful state with wonderful people, and it is a great opportunity for those up-and-coming dentists to experience regional Queensland. I certainly commend the bill to the House.