




Speech By
Leanne Linard

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

Record of Proceedings, 6 September 2017

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

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (4.30 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2017. The Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee made one recommendation: that the bill be passed. The bill's objectives are to amend the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009, as agreed by the COAG Health Council on 29 May 2017 in response to the final report of the independent review of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for Health Professions commissioned in 2014. I will not go into detail with regard to each of the amendments contained in the bill as the minister has already done so in detail for the benefit of the House.

The proposed amendments implement the first stage of the COAG Health Council's two-stage response to the independent review agreed to in May of this year by the council and the cabinet of each state and territory. As we are the host jurisdiction of the national law, if the bill is passed by the Queensland parliament, the amendments to the national law will apply automatically in other jurisdictions except for South Australia, which must make regulations to adopt the changes, and Western Australia, which would need to enact its own separate legislation.

The committee was advised that consultation at a national level undertaken as part of the independent review was extensive, including consultation forums in each capital city, national local forums and briefings with over 200 attendees in total and the receipt of over 230 written submissions. The committee heard that most submitters were supportive of the proposed amendments during this consultation phase with some submitters' concerns resulting in changes to the draft bill.

During our examination of the bill the committee received 37 submissions and held a public briefing and a public hearing to hear from interested stakeholders. The feedback received during our committee consultation largely mirrored that of the independent review consultation process with most submitters being broadly supportive of the bill. Some submitters, however, raised concerns with regard to, or opposed changes to, national boards by regulation and a number sought clarification about amendments broadening the requirements to provide health practitioner practice information.

Queensland Health advised in response to the 37 submissions received and accepted by the committee in respect of the bill that a number of issues in submissions had not been raised previously and will be referred to the COAG Health Council for consideration during the second stage of the reform process. These issues included the use of alternative dispute resolution to resolve notifications, issues concerning notifications made in relation to medico-legal assessments and reserving the practice of acupuncture for certain registered health professionals.

Separate to the national law reform, the bill also contains a number of proposed amendments to the Health Ombudsman Act 2013 requested by the Health Ombudsman during our earlier committee inquiry into the performance of his functions tabled in December of last year. As part of the inquiry, the

Queensland Health Ombudsman submitted a list of suggested amendments to the Health Ombudsman Act. While the majority of those amendments are undergoing further detailed consideration, a number have been progressed in this bill including providing the Health Ombudsman with powers to vary an immediate registration action or an interim prohibition order on the Health Ombudsman's own initiative or an application by a health practitioner. These powers will be used if there has been a material change in circumstances such as if the risks associated with a practitioner had changed since the Health Ombudsman's original decision, better protecting public health and safety.

I am particularly pleased to see this long awaited and very worthy amendment to the national law to introduce national registration for paramedics. The increasing scope of practice and complexity of paramedicine experienced by some 14,000 paramedics across Australia warrants this important step. Paramedicine will become a health profession regulated by the national law and therefore subject to the same regulatory arrangements as all other health professions including doctors, nurses and dentists. This means national standards for entry to practice, accreditation of training programs and protection of the title 'paramedic'. Importantly, it will also mean that, once established, the paramedicine board will be able to take action to deal with a paramedic who engages in unprofessional conduct or professional misconduct, is poorly performing or has an impairment that affects their practice.

I believe this is a positive step in both the continued professionalisation of the paramedicine workforce and the management of health complaints and public safety overall. They make a huge contribution to our community. I know they are very excited and supportive of this amendment, and I thank the minister for bringing it forward. I thank the department, those who submitted, the committee secretariat and my committee colleagues for their input and assistance during the bill's inquiry. I commend the bill to the House.