




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

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HEALTH TRANSPARENCY BILL

 **Mr O'ROURKE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (6.32 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Health Transparency Bill 2019. As part of the health committee we visited numerous aged-care facilities and a common issue raised by residents was that staff were good but there were just not enough of them. When chatting to residents, some spoke of having to wait for extended periods of time when they had pressed the buzzer for personal assistance. Queensland's elderly residents in aged-care facilities deserve to be treated in a timely manner to ensure their dignity. We heard stories of elderly residents waiting for long periods after pressing the buzzer due to limited number of staff and that, given the delays, they had soiled themselves or worse—that is, they got out of bed and had a fall causing injury, and some of those injured residents died as a result.

As members are aware, what happened at Earle Haven on the Gold Coast should never happen again. It was disgraceful, it is not good enough and it cannot be allowed to happen again. Leading Age Services Australia has released a report stating that there are approximately 200 aged-care facilities that were at an unacceptable risk of going broke. Insufficient federal funding has led to stories. For example, we heard that some aged-care facilities had not provided high-quality care for residents and that some are just so underfunded they are running on skeleton staff. We also heard stories of feeding residents on \$6 a day and letting staffing levels fall dangerously low. Some also believe that chemical and physical restraints have been used in a way to match staffing levels. This bill will allow family and friends to know how many staff are at an aged-care facility that they are considering for a loved one and if the aged-care facility refuses to provide this information we will advise the public on the website. As for the 16 publicly owned and operated aged-care facilities, we will mandate staff-to-patient ratios. Our ageing Queenslanders need to be looked after and provided with high-quality aged care in a timely way.

As part of the aged-care review, we also heard horrific stories of people waiting in excess of four years for their in-home support packages and some had passed away before they had been received. These delays in receiving their packages mean that we have seen an increase in hospital admissions as a result. This is an absolute disgrace. Our Prime Minister and the federal government should hang their heads in shame for treating our ageing Queenslanders in such an appalling way. This is about making aged care better for our loved ones, and they deserve to be treated with dignity and provided with high-quality care. Our ageing Queenslanders deserve the best.

This bill will also provide expanded transparency of information from public and private hospitals. This publicly reported information from both hospitals and aged-care facilities will be reported on an interactive website which is being developed to help consumers compare private and public facilities when making decisions about their health care. This website will publish transparent public information about public and private hospitals including general information, compliance information, process of care and patient outcome data for clinical specialties. The availability of this public information is a win for all Queenslanders and their families. We on this side of the chamber believe in transparency and this will allow Queenslanders to make informed decisions about their health care based on the best available publicly reported information. I commend the bill to the House.