




Speech By
Charis Mullen

MEMBER FOR JORDAN

Record of Proceedings, 2 May 2019

HEALTH AND WELLBEING QUEENSLAND BILL

 **Mrs MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (4.11 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Health and Wellbeing Queensland Bill 2019. Our health system will impact almost everyone at some point in their lives, directly or indirectly, with the intention of providing a long and fulfilling life. The objective of this bill, through the creation of a statutory public health commission, seeks to improve the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders, reduce the risk factors for chronic disease and reduce health inequity.

Wellbeing is a complex combination of a person's physical, mental and emotional health and their social and economic circumstances. Improving our health and wellbeing not only improves our quality of life; it can have broader benefits for our society such as better productivity, happier families and reduced demand on health and social services. We know that the human and economic costs of not addressing these risk factors are significant for our state. This is something the Palaszczuk government has already begun to tackle.

In May 2016 the then health minister, Cameron Dick, launched *My health, Queensland's future: Advancing health 2026*. Advancing Health 2026 is a vision for the entire health sector and provides a framework for the government, Queensland Health and the broader health system to focus their efforts on addressing the challenges faced by all states and territories. The vision that Advancing Health 2026 is working to make a reality is simply that by 2026 Queenslanders will be among the healthiest people in the world.

Globally, health systems are under increasing pressure to improve health access, equity and quality, reduce costs of services, and provide services to the community that ultimately reduce hospitalisation and improve community health outcomes. The shift of focus from the acute hospital setting to a closer-to-home, wellness based model of care is one challenging all health services across the world. Delivering health care has its own set of challenges in Queensland—challenges of distance and a disperse population, challenges of meeting the healthcare needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and challenges of increasing demand. Meeting these challenges requires all our efforts to find new and innovative solutions. How do we do things differently to keep people well?

In recent decades substantial progress has been made in reducing early deaths, and Australia has moved up the life expectancy rankings amongst similarly developed nations. A sustained focus is needed to continue to reduce preventable diseases through lifestyle and behavioural change. Building more hospitals will not improve the health of the population unless it is supported with local and coordinated regional and statewide programs to improve the wellness of the population.

Some gains have been and are being made. For example, improved lifestyles are reducing the number of hospitalisations in Queensland for chronic diseases such as coronary heart disease, stroke, some cancers and some respiratory diseases. Death rates for lifestyle related chronic conditions are decreasing, which means that people are living longer and are able to contribute to community and

family life for longer. Increasing the period of good health, wellness and vitality has the potential to delay the onset of illness and infirmity and potentially compress it to a very short period before death. If this can be achieved, health system costs will be constrained. However, as we know, this cannot be achieved through improvements in treatment alone.

While Health and Wellbeing Queensland will have a broad mandate to improve population health, initially the focus will be on reducing those risk factors for chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer. It was disappointing to hear a member opposite effectively shaming those who struggle with obesity, but obesity, low physical activity and poor nutrition are not simple things to address as they are in many cases influenced by social determinants—early years development, education, employment, housing and, of course, financial access to healthy food. This is particularly important. There are many people in my own electorate for whom access to affordable fruit and vegetables is difficult. I pay credit to organisations like Gailes Community House in my electorate, which operates Budget Grub Hub, with the support of Foodbank, allowing members of our community to stock their pantries with low-cost grocery items including some free items like bread, milk, fruit and vegetables.

Giving all Queenslanders equal opportunity to experience good health and wellbeing demands strategies that cross sectors and government, engage communities and businesses and empower individuals and families. The health system has a role in supporting Queenslanders to make healthy lifestyle choices. This is not only good for individual wellbeing; it is also a key foundation to Queensland's social fabric and economic prosperity. I commend the bill to the House.