




Speech By
Charis Mullen

MEMBER FOR JORDAN

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HEALTH TRANSPARENCY BILL

 **Mrs MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (4.43 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to the debate on the Health Transparency Bill 2019. This is a very important bill before us because, as noted by the parliamentary committee that was tasked to review this legislation, the bill deals with the welfare of elderly Queenslanders and one of the most important ingredients for safe, dignified and professional care of our elderly in nursing homes—the staff. The legislation proposes to establish a legislative framework to compel public and private health facilities and residential aged-care facilities to provide certain information and to enable that information to be published. It is clear, even from international research, that transparency of health service information leads to better quality of care and outcomes.

Currently in Queensland we do not have easy access to information about public and private health services or aged-care facilities. The information to be provided includes: general information, administrative in nature; quality and safety information, including a range of clinical information and patient data; and residential care information, which includes information about the nursing care and personal care provided to residents of residential aged-care facilities, including staffing.

As important as it will be to gather this information, how it is published will be equally important. The Department of Health has confirmed that the information will be published on a new interactive website as an easy way to access information about health and residential aged-care facilities that is up to date, informative and Queensland focused, whilst also providing a single point of reference. Importantly, this will not be a marketing comparative tool but a proper source of quality information for consumers to make informed decisions about their own care or the care of their loved ones. A number of key stakeholders were very supportive of the bill's intent, including the AMA, which congratulated the government for these changes, particularly the move to publish the level of care, safety and health outcomes in hospitals and aged-care facilities and the introduction of minimum nurse and support worker skill mix ratios in public residential aged-care facilities.

I am sure that, as representatives, we have all heard stories about the experience of our older residents within aged-care facilities. Very early on in my time as a member of parliament, I met with a lovely constituent who wanted to share the story of her mother's care in a residential aged-care facility. Sadly, it is a tale too often told: there was not enough nursing staff employed within the facility and those who worked there were rushed off their feet and unable to provide proper care. I saw photos of the elderly lady's bed sores gained because there was no-one available to help move her and her bandages were put on so unprofessionally that one would question the nurse's basic qualifications.

My constituent made the decision to move her mother to another facility, as it was clear that to leave her mother there would be to hasten her death. My constituent then showed me two other photos, one taken of her mother in her former aged-care facility and the other of her mother in the new facility. It was those two photos that shocked me and broke my heart a little. The first photo showed an elderly woman who looked sad and lost. The second photo was transformative. The same elderly woman was smiling and looking healthier and certainly happier. The difference was clear and it was all due to the increased care and support received in the new facility.

As my generation begins to deal with ageing parents, I want to know that my parents will have quality care, hopefully in their home for as long as possible but, if necessary, in a trusted residential aged-care facility. As we have recently read, the royal commission into aged care has found that our country's aged care system is 'sad and shocking' and 'diminishes Australia as a nation'. That does not fill me with hope, but the Health Transparency Bill that is before us goes some way to bringing our health and aged-care systems into the light, to ensure that we are raising the bar and the expectations of what care for our elderly should be, without question and without excuses. I commend this bill to the House.