




Speech By  
**Dr Christian Rowan**

**MEMBER FOR MOGGILL**

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### **HEALTH TRANSPARENCY BILL**

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (6.52 pm): As the Liberal National Party shadow minister for communities and shadow minister for disability services and seniors, I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Health Transparency Bill 2019. From the outset I wish to note that the Liberal National Party opposition will not be opposing this bill.

The true measure of any society is how it treats and looks after its most vulnerable. Sadly, when it comes to some of our most senior Queenslanders there has been a number of devastating failures in the provision of care for senior residents, as numerous reports of recent events have shown. To that end I acknowledge and commend the federal Morrison coalition government for establishing the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, a decision which has the full support of the Queensland Liberal National Party.

The recently released interim report by the royal commission makes for some truly devastating and heartbreaking reading. As all elected representatives in this House will know, this 10-month inquiry has revealed systemic failures in the aged-care sector, with the royal commission even going so far as to label the sector as 'a shocking tale of neglect'.

Following the release of the interim report, the prompt response by the federal LNP government is to be commended. The Prime Minister announced more than half a billion dollars in funding for the sector, including nearly \$500 million for 10,000 additional home care packages, more than \$25 million to be spent on better medication management programs to reduce the use of chemical restraints and close to \$5 million to be spent on meeting new targets to stop young people with disabilities being placed into aged-care facilities.

Against this backdrop, this legislation before the House today seeks to establish and amend and forge a number of substantial legislative changes aimed not just at the residential aged-care sector but also both public and private hospitals. The main purpose of this bill is to improve transparency in public and private health facilities and in residential aged-care facilities. This bill also seeks to amend the Health Ombudsman Act 2013 in order to improve the operation and the efficiency of the health complaints system.

As per the stated policy objectives, this bill sets out three key objectives: firstly, to establish a legislative framework for collecting and publishing information about public and private hospitals and residential aged-care facilities; secondly, to amend the Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011 to introduce a minimum nurse and support worker skill mix ratio and minimum average daily resident care hours in public residential aged-care facilities; and, thirdly, to amend the Health Ombudsman Act 2013 to implement recommendations of the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee's inquiry into the performance of the Health Ombudsman's functions pursuant to section 179 of the Health Ombudsman Act 2013.

In my time I would like to focus on two of the key aspects of the bill: nurse-to-patient ratios and the new reporting framework. As has been articulated by my Liberal National Party colleagues—and I take this opportunity to thank in particular the shadow minister for health, Ros Bates MP, as well as the

member for Caloundra, who is the deputy chair of the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee, Mark McArdle MP, for their extensive and considered examination of this legislation—the genesis for implementing nurse-to-patient ratios in aged-care facilities dates back to the 2017 state election after commitments that were made by the Labor Party at that time. Now, more than two years later and as we approach the final 11 months of this parliament's term, Labor seeks to amend the Hospital and Health Boards Regulation 2012 to prescribe the operational aspects of the aged-care ratios for public residential aged-care facilities, including a minimum nurse percentage—that is, registered nurses and enrolled nurses—of 50 per cent with a minimum of 30 per cent of nurses required to be registered nurses during a 24-hour period and a minimum average daily resident care requirement of 3.65 hours.

It has been foreshadowed that these changes will be implemented over a two-year phase-in period. By the time these changes will be fully implemented it will be some four years since Labor first made this commitment to Queensland seniors. It really does beg the question as to why it has taken this length of time. It also invites many Queensland seniors and their families to question the importance that the Palaszczuk Labor government is placing on quality care services for residents in aged care and the priority that Labor places on its own obligations to deliver its commitments.

Turning briefly to the new reporting framework, I note that this bill will enable a new legislative framework to compel public and private health facilities and residential aged-care facilities to provide information and to enable that information to also be published. I also note that it is intended for this information to be published on a new interactive website. As stated in the bill's explanatory notes with regard to public and private health facilities, this bill will empower the chief executive of Queensland Health to request general information and quality and safety information. As for public and private residential aged-care facilities, again as per the explanatory notes, the chief executive of Queensland Health will be empowered to collect and publish general information and residential care information and that will certainly enhance transparency and accountability.

The chief executive may also request information which aids in the understanding of this information. That will potentially allow for shared learnings to occur across various health institutions and across the entire sector here in Queensland. Importantly, the information or data that is ultimately published must not contain personal information about an individual, in accordance with privacy provisions. Whilst the website will not publish confidential information, this legislation does provide a mechanism for information obtained under health legislation to be used for and on the website, and this will ensure that relevant confidentiality provisions are not breached when information obtained under such legislation is used for publication.

Ultimately, this comes down to what the Liberal National Party has been saying all along: Queenslanders deserve a world-class healthcare system and, what is more, Queenslanders want to see world-class aged-care facilities that look after our most senior citizens in Queensland. As I said at the start of my contribution, the true measure of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable. In our society, Queenslanders who have worked hard all of their lives deserve nothing less than to be treated with the utmost dignity and respect, particularly those who require the services of aged-care facilities.

Sadly, in recent times when concerns have been raised regarding the provision of care by state owned facilities, we have seen the Palaszczuk Labor government more interested in reverting to its usual political blame games and its blame-Canberra approach. Queenslanders deserve better. It is time that the Palaszczuk Labor government worked collaboratively to deliver what is in the best interests of all Queenslanders.

I acknowledge all members of the Queensland parliament's Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee for their work in examining this legislation. Today it was a pleasure to be a co-patron of the inaugural gathering of Parliamentary Friends of Dementia, along with the member for Lytton, Joan Pease. I acknowledge Dementia Australia and the various members who attended and contributed to today's event. I look forward to supporting Dementia Australia into the future, given that dementia is a significant issue in our community. I have run out of time, so I will conclude by saying that the Liberal National Party and I will not be opposing the Health Transparency Bill 2019.