




Speech By  
**Dale Last**

**MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN**

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### **HEALTH AND WELLBEING QUEENSLAND BILL**

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (5.17 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the Health and Wellbeing Queensland Bill 2019. In picking up on some of the points raised by my colleague the member for Glass House, it is so very important that this new authority take a statewide view and perspective when it comes to health and wellbeing. I note that this new body will be contributing to improving the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders, while reducing the risk factors associated with chronic disease and reducing health inequities.

I owned and operated a personal training business for some 10 years in Townsville. I have to say that that was probably some of the most satisfying work I have ever done. That really opened my eyes to some of the challenges that face us when it comes to addressing health issues, particularly obesity and preventive health. I was training people across all spectrums, from children to elderly clients. Exercise on its own will never cut it. There needs to be an education campaign and it needs to be based on nutrition and lifestyle and all of those factors holistically if you are going to address this problem. We can all go out and exercise, but if you do not have your head around some of those other fundamentals around healthy eating and lifestyle then exercise on its own will never cut it.

I remember training a veterans rowing crew who did not have a real history of exercise. They came to me in all shapes and sizes and with different illnesses. I took them to one of the biggest gyms in Townsville for the very first time. I got some pretty surprised looks when I walked in with this group, but they began an exercise program and over a period of about three months without exception every single one of those veteran rowers came to me and said that they were throwing away their blood pressure tablets and all the pills that they needed to get themselves through daily life. The difference that made to their life and has continued to this day because they all embraced the concept of health and wellbeing was phenomenal.

When we talk about health and wellbeing there is a real message there particularly for this authority in terms of how they get that out there and how they roll those programs out. I have lived in some of the remotest parts of Queensland. The more remote the community, the greater the challenge. Before I was elected I spent two years on Palm Island. Members would appreciate that there are some chronic illnesses and diseases in that community. When we look at their options for exercise and healthy eating on a place like Palm Island, we can appreciate the difficulties and the obstacles that we have to get over if we are going to roll this program out right across Queensland. It is absolutely imperative that this authority takes a global view of this issue and how they roll that out across this state. When we are talking about communities like Palm Island which do not have a lot of options in terms of exercise and healthy eating, it becomes very challenging. I can talk about the store on Palm Island. The availability of fresh fruit and vegetables, for example, is something we take for granted. We can go out and buy that every single day of the week. If you live on Palm Island or in the cape where I was stationed in a little place called Laura then you do not have that. That really reinforces the challenges of promoting healthy eating.

When it comes to children and activity, I think we have lost our way. I will give the House an example. I have a school in my electorate of 700-odd students. I walked in there some weeks ago and there would have been less than 10 bicycles on the school bike racks. Once upon a time there would have been 400 or 500 bicycles on the bike racks, but all of those students are now being driven to and from school. There is an obligation as a community, from the ground level up, to encourage children from that young age to do more exercise.

Exercise for a lot of kids is prohibitively expensive. I have a 10-year-old and a seven-year-old at home who play sport, and it costs a lot of money if they want to play soccer or football. That can really stymie opportunities for a lot of kids, particularly if they come from families who cannot afford those sorts of expenses. That needs to be looked at as well. Are we providing equal opportunities across the state for all kids if we are talking about increasing exercise?

When I was a personal trainer, I thought it would be good if GPs could prescribe exercise, if GPs could write out a script to send a person to a personal trainer or a gym instead of sending them to the chemist to buy more pills. Wouldn't that be something outside the square and wouldn't that contribute in the long run to a healthier community? I think that needs to be pursued by this authority when it is set up in terms of looking outside the square for options to increase physical activity and the incentives that we can provide in doing so.

My wife is a psychologist. I know that it is not specifically mentioned in this bill—

**Ms Grace** interjected.

**Mr LAST:** I take the interjection. I am my wife's greatest challenge, but that is okay. The increasing number of kids whose psychological health is now suffering is really concerning and it should be concerning every single one of us in this place. Kids who are five, six and seven years old who are now going to a psychologist to seek counselling should be sounding alarm bells for each and every one of us in this place. I find it really difficult to grasp that kids of that age are having to get professional counselling over several months and in some cases years to deal with mental health issues, and that will manifest itself later on as they progress into their teens. That is something we need to be looking at as well. I know it is not necessarily a focus of this bill, but in terms of the bigger health picture I think we need to be looking at that as well as we go forward.

I support the bill and what it is doing. I hope it is not just setting up another bureaucracy. I would like to think that the money that is being used to establish this authority will filter down to all levels and give everyone equal opportunity in terms of health and wellbeing. I look forward to seeing how it rolls out.