




Speech By
Joseph Kelly

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

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MEDICINES AND POISONS BILL

THERAPEUTIC GOODS BILL

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (5.25 pm): I support the bill. This legislation is centrally important to nurses, to doctors and to pharmacists, but most important of all it is particularly important to the patients whom we care for. Medications are a key element in modern health care and one great example of that is what we have seen in relation to heart health over the last 40 or 50 years. We have seen significant increases in life expectancy, mainly due to improvements in heart health. While lifestyle factors around smoking, diet and exercise have all contributed to that, the great work done by the army of GPs in our community and the primary healthcare sector that manage heart health medications has contributed significantly to that.

This bill is updating an 82-year-old piece of legislation. It aims to identify the activities and substances that are to be regulated, it aims to regulate the people who can use the substance and it authorises persons to have competencies and be accountable for the effective uses of these substances, and that is really important and that is what I want to talk about today—that is, competencies and accountabilities. The administration of medication takes great skill. You use assessment skills, both before and after, you give medications. You listen to patients. You analyse data. You have a range of skills in terms of administration practices, measuring and calculations. It is not a simple process. I am forever hearing stories of people who think it is but who get into strife. Just today I heard a horror story about Stilnox which demonstrated to me again why we need competent people to administer medications.

I note the concerns of the Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union in relation to this bill and the potential to extend medication management to unlicensed practitioners in aged care, and I share those concerns. We are at a time of great scrutiny and increased scrutiny in aged care, and that is right and just. Like all nurses, I was shocked and disgusted when I watched that *Four Corners* report and saw the way that older Australians were being treated in this country—and, sadly, being treated by some of my professional colleagues. Like all nurses, it made me want to commit personally as a professional to making sure that we continue to deliver excellent care to patients. One of the ways that we do that is to ensure that we have competent people and accountable people who are able to do the job of nursing, and administration of medications is a very important part in relation to that.

I have raised my concerns directly with the minister and I am extremely pleased with the responses that I have received. I know there are some bills before the House and I do not want to anticipate those, but I certainly believe that he shares my views around the need for greater accountability and transparency in aged care. Many other speakers have spoken about real-time prescription monitoring and medicinal cannabis, so I will leave those matters there. The main issue that I wanted to turn my mind to was the competencies and accountabilities required by professional staff, and I think I have raised those concerns. I commend the bills to the House.