




Speech By  
**Leanne Linard**  
MEMBER FOR NUDGEES

---

Record of Proceedings, 2 May 2019

## HEALTH AND WELLBEING QUEENSLAND BILL

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (11.27 am): It is a pleasure to rise in this House to support the Health and Wellbeing Queensland Bill 2019. In 2015, as chair of the former Health and Ambulance Services Committee, we inquired into the potential roles, scope and strategic directions of a Queensland health promotion commission. That inquiry's genesis was a bold and, I believe, visionary election commitment of our government from opposition at the time to improve the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders by reducing the risk factors associated with chronic disease and health inequity in this state. This commitment stood in stark contrast to the over \$8 million in annual grants to help provide health prevention, promotion and early intervention and the 177 health promotion and prevention officers who were cut under the previous LNP Newman government.

During that initial inquiry the committee found that there is strong support from non-government and tertiary health and academic stakeholders for the establishment of a health promotion commission. The committee travelled to Perth to meet with the West Australian Health Promotion Foundation; Melbourne to meet with the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation; and teleconferenced with the South Australian Department of Health and Ageing, who outlined their HiAP approach, to allow the committee to consider comparative health promotion arrangements across Australia.

While each jurisdiction does it differently, each jurisdiction spoke strongly of the importance of having a coordinated strategic focus on health promotion and prevention efforts to address the social determinants of health and reduce the risk factors of chronic disease and, in doing so, the significant cost of tertiary health care to the community.

The former health committee also examined the Healthy Futures Commission Queensland Bill 2017, which sought to give effect to the findings of the earlier inquiry but which sadly lapsed when the House was dissolved for the last state election. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the former health minister, Cameron Dick, under whom the first two inquiries were conducted and who, along with his office, gave great support to this initiative. It was very gratifying to have the opportunity to see the process through to fruition in the current parliament, though now as the chair of the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee, when the bill was referred to us.

As I said in my foreword, this bill and the establishment of Health and Wellbeing Queensland provides an exciting opportunity to provide long-term strategic leadership and direction on whole-of-government initiatives and partnerships to address the social determinants of health. It can act as an independent champion, engage with the diverse sectors engaged in health promotion, add to the empirical base underlying health promotion policy in Queensland and foster the innovative thinking required to reduce health inequity.

The bill establishes the agency as an independent statutory body to work in partnership with other government and non-government organisations to promote health and wellbeing. Key amongst these will be Queensland Health. The work of Health and Wellbeing Queensland will include funding

and supporting evidence based and locally supported initiatives, including the allocation of grants to contribute to improved health across Queensland, to promote a cross-sectoral approach to health promotion and to provide advice to the minister on the same.

The objective of Health and Wellbeing Queensland is to reduce the burden of chronic diseases through targeting risk factors such as poor nutrition, low physical activity and obesity, and reducing health inequity in Queensland. We all know that chronic disease is experienced disparately by those who are often most vulnerable across our community. Research and best practice in illness prevention and health promotion has increasingly focused on the social determinants of health—that is, the circumstances in which people grow, live, work and age—and the systems put in place to deal with illness. The interaction of these factors is often complex and by no means uniform for each individual or population group, so we need to be innovative, we need to be flexible, we need to take a cross-sectoral approach and we need to harness the absolute powerhouse of expertise, research and innovation that exists within Queensland to find localised and targeted solutions as well as identify gaps in research and keep our understanding of best policy practice in this regard evolving.

I believe that this is what the highly successful VicHealth Health Promotion Foundation has done in Victoria over the past 32 years, with bipartisan support. I believe that we can similarly advance health promotion in this state, but it will take long-term shared political will to do so. In Victoria, Labor and conservative governments alike have recognised the benefits of investment in preventive health measures. Because of it, they have a health promotion agency that has spanned three decades. We know that what you invest in prevention you save in tertiary health care and avoidable human suffering. We get it. We always have. With long-term sustained commitment, long-term outcomes can be achieved for the benefit of all Queenslanders, and Queenslanders deserve that investment.

The consistent theme throughout each inquiry has been the strong support amongst health, medical and sporting bodies, non-government organisations and tertiary research institutes for the establishment of a Queensland health promotion agency. These stakeholders, like the Heart Foundation, Cancer Council, Stroke Foundation, QUT, Diabetes Queensland, AMAQ, Health Consumers Queensland and QIMR, among others, are the powerhouse of expertise, research and innovation that I spoke of earlier. Many of them, certainly all those I just mentioned, have been involved in each inquiry and at every hearing. I also thank the Department of Health for its assistance and expertise throughout all three inquiries. I know it has put a lot of effort and consideration into how to best operationalise this policy commitment.

Finally, I thank the Minister for Health, Steven Miles, for his commitment to setting up an agency that can make a true difference to the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders for generations to come. The minister knows that I am passionate about evidence based policy, and I know he is likewise. He has responded to every recommendation of previous inquiries and taken all feedback on board to bring forward the best possible model. I commend the bill to the House.