




Speech By
Meaghan Scanlon

MEMBER FOR GAVEN

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HEALTH TRANSPARENCY BILL

 **Ms SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (12.45 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Health Transparency Bill 2019. When I was in primary school my grandmother was diagnosed with dementia. Her three sons and daughter tried to provide additional care. However, this became increasingly difficult as her capacity started to diminish. My family, like many other families across this country, trusted and relied on aged-care facilities to be there when we could not be. That trust has eroded over many years resulting in what the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety so appropriately titled in their interim report ‘a shocking tale of neglect’.

This will be the fourth time I have spoken in this House about the need to ensure a safe level of staffing in our aged-care facilities, so I am proud to stand here today supporting a bill that does just that. This bill establishes minimum standards of staffing and care for public residential aged-care facilities. It does this by introducing a minimum nurse and registered nurse skill mix ratio, as well as by setting minimum hours of care that must be provided to each resident each day. Evidence shows increased staff and nurse-to-patient ratios lead to improved quality of care and ultimately better patient outcomes.

We can make a difference in the 16 residential aged-care facilities run by Queensland Health which care for over 1,000 older Queenslanders but, ultimately, the federal government is responsible for regulating and funding residential aged-care facilities in all states and territories. Unfortunately, our government cannot fix the dangerously low staffing levels in private facilities. That is something that the Morrison government could do, but at the moment is refusing to do. The royal commission interim report said—

The aged care system lacks fundamental transparency. Witnesses from the Australian Department of Health told us that there is very little information available to the public about the performance of service providers.

We think that Queenslanders deserve to be able to access information about the health facilities they use, whether that is public or private hospitals or aged-care facilities. This bill creates a framework to collect and publish the average hours of daily care nurses and support workers provide to each resident at aged-care facilities. Private aged-care facilities can opt out of reporting this information, but their decision to do so will be published online for families to see.

Unfortunately, not only is the federal government refusing to follow these nation-leading reforms but they have actually opposed this measure, arguing that quarterly reporting would ‘create a reporting burden on providers, with no clear benefit to consumers’. I table the *Courier-Mail* article titled ‘Feds resist plan to show aged-care staff ratios’.

Tabled paper: Media article, undated, titled ‘Feds resist plan to show aged-care staff ratios’ [2185](#).

I have had the opportunity to hear from a number of aged-care staff over the last two years, many of whom go above and beyond because they love their job and the people they care for, but they are tired, overworked and unappreciated. Many said that the staffing levels are unsafe, forcing residents to wait longer than they should for help. They also talked about the insufficient time they have to properly

clean and feed residents and that essential items like incontinence pads are being rationed. Lisa, a volunteer in Nerang, shared the story of her grandmother who keeps getting UTIs in a for-profit aged-care facility because there are not enough staff to take her to the toilet. It does not stop there.

The *Courier-Mail* recently published an article about Mr John Callaghan, who was found with maggots crawling in his ear at the for-profit Commonwealth subsidised Tugun Bupa facility on the Gold Coast. I table a copy of that article for the House.

Tabled paper. Media article, undated, titled 'Maggots in subsidised nursing home' [2186](#).

It goes on to say that, despite increasing the number of beds last year, Australia's largest for-profit provider slashed spending on suppliers and employees by \$24 million.

The QNMU also did a statewide audit of aged-care facilities which found that the federal electorate of Moncrief, which takes in Nerang and Carrara in my community, had the worst hours of care provided to residents in the state. Despite all of these horrifying stories, what do the Gold Coast LNP members do—even the LNP members who were in this chamber during the debate? When concerns were raised by the Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union about chronic understaffing, the member for Mudgeeraba said, 'This will be another scare campaign from the QNU during the federal election'. When I called for action in this chamber earlier this year the member for Southern Downs yelled at me, saying 'stop pandering to the unions'.

Ms Bates interjected.

Ms SCANLON: So rude! Members of parliament should be listening to our hardworking nurses, personal care workers and residents in the aged-care sector, not tearing them down. I will conclude by reading the words of an aged-care staff member posted on a Gold Coast community Facebook page recently, who said—

I have just completed my course in aged care, i am currently on work experience and this is terrible. These residents are not getting showered, fed, changed etc on time or sometimes at all. There is 1 staff member per 40 residents.

I table a copy of that post for the House.

Tabled paper. Extract of social media post, undated, in relation to aged care [2187](#).

There have been at least 18 reports into Australian aged care since 1997. It should not take over 20 years to fix this problem. It takes political courage. That is what this side of the chamber is doing. I commend this bill to the House.