




Speech By
Michael Hart

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

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HEALTH AND WELLBEING QUEENSLAND BILL

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (11.48 am): I rise to add to the debate on the Health and Wellbeing Queensland Bill. There are a lot of good things that could come out of this, but I want to reflect on some of the things that the member for Maryborough had to say in his contribution. It is interesting to note that the member for Maryborough says that the Palaszczuk government is being proactive with this bill—proactive in that it made an election commitment in 2015 to bring this forward and sent it off to a committee. The committee decided that this was a good idea but could not decide on how it should be constructed, so this issue did not come in the form of a bill into the House until May 2017. That bill then sat on the *Notice Paper* for six months until the government went to an election and it lapsed, and now we see the bill back before the House in 2019.

The member for Maryborough's proactive activity from the Palaszczuk government is to wait for four years for something that is apparently important to the health and wellbeing of the people of Queensland. The member for Maryborough thinks that being proactive is to wait for four years to do nothing about hospital ramping, to run down the health system, to put the health system right back where it was under the bad days of Anna Bligh when she wanted to break up the health system into a number of areas and maybe—

Mr KELLY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiting): Thank you, member for Greenslopes. Member for Burleigh, I think you are sticking to the long title of the bill and the general principles. Please keep that in mind when you proceed.

Mr HART: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. As I was saying, Anna Bligh wanted to break up the health system. This bill is breaking up the health department. We know that the Labor Party loves bureaucracy. This bill puts in place what could end up being a quango.

Having said that, I think there could be some good outcomes. The member for Mudgeeraba and the member for Currumbin covered a lot of those outcomes. One of the proposed functions of Health and Wellbeing Queensland is to facilitate and commission activities to prevent illness or promote health and wellbeing. If that function of Health and Wellbeing Queensland comes to fruition, that is a good thing.

Another function of Health and Wellbeing Queensland is to develop partnerships and collaborate across government and with entities such as businesses, industry organisations, community organisations, academia, local governments and individuals to further its objective or carry out its functions. One would hope that the Department of Health might be doing that at this point. If Health and Wellbeing Queensland does that, that is a good thing.

Another function is to give grants for activities to further its objective or carry out its functions. One would think that the Department of Health is probably doing that but, if Health and Wellbeing Queensland achieves that, that is possibly a good thing as well. It is proposed that Health and Wellbeing will do a number of other things but, as I say, the member for Mudgeeraba and the member for Currumbin have covered them.

Another important function of Health and Wellbeing Queensland is to establish a foundation to support its activities. There could be some fundraising involved in that. I note that the bill allows for a board of this government quango, if I can use that term, comprising up to 10 members. It will have a chief executive and staff. Health and Wellbeing Queensland will have a budget of \$32.95 million in 2019-20. No doubt, as happens traditionally with Labor Party bureaucracy, that figure will grow. Let us hope there are some real outcomes from the establishment of Health and Wellbeing Queensland.

I want to raise a couple of issues. I notice that the minister can give directions to HWQ. The minister can ask HWQ to prepare a special report on a matter that the minister considers relevant to HWQ's function or powers and HWQ must comply with that ministerial direction. This is nothing strange about that. However, the minister cannot direct HWQ about the content of the special report. That has to be a good thing.

I also notice that, once that special report is given back to the minister, the minister may publish the report in a way that the minister feels is appropriate. We have all seen how Labor ministers do not bother to publish reports. They do not think that it is appropriate at all to give reports out to the public so that we have the open, transparent and apparently accountable government that the Premier keeps telling us that this Labor government is. Those of us on this side of the House know that there is absolutely nothing open, transparent, or accountable about the Labor government in Queensland. The sooner that ends, the sooner a lot of us will be a lot happier.

I have a question for the minister that I would not mind receiving an answer to. I am not sure whether the Mudgeeraba raised this point. Currently, Queensland Health delivers programs that are aimed at reducing chronic disease and improving nutrition and physical activities. These are transitioning to HWQ. I wonder if the minister could tell us if Queensland Health's preventive health branch will continue under these new arrangements or if it will disappear. We did not hear about that from the members of the committee in their contributions. That was possibly discussed at the committee hearings and we might hear a bit more of about that in the future.

The member for Maryborough said that this bill is one of the best things that Queensland Health could do. I suspect that providing some more beds in our hospitals or stopping ramping at our hospitals might be a better thing to do than to introduce another layer of bureaucracy at a cost of \$32 million a year. As I said, if there are some outcomes from Health and Wellbeing Queensland I will be very pleased, but I have to tell members that I would be extremely surprised if there are any outcomes that comes out of anything that those opposite do. They would be far better off stopping patients from having to be treated in hallways, in offices, in the back of ambulances on ramps—

Ms PUGH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I am sorry, I am really struggling to see the relevance to the bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiting): Order! I will deal with the issue of relevance. The explanatory notes outline the objectives for this bill, which include improving the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders, reducing the risk factors associated with chronic disease, reducing health inequities, and enabling the establishment of a foundation to support HWQ. There will be a few people rising on a point of order of relevance. I remind you all that the explanatory notes set out what the long title of the bill is about and also the general principles behind it. I ask the member to recommence and keep that in mind.

Mr HART: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I was referring to HWQ bureaucracy and the outcomes that might be achieved from that and what, in my view, better outcomes might be. As the member for Mudgeeraba said, the LNP supports this bill, but I have raised a number of questions and I hope that the minister might be able to respond to those questions in his summing-up of the debate. I will leave my contribution there.