




Speech By
Ros Bates

MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

Record of Proceedings, 3 April 2019

HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (3.01 pm): I rise to address the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill introduced by the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services on 13 November 2018. According to the explanatory notes introduced at the time the bill was introduced, the bill will make amendments to repeal the Public Health (Medicinal Cannabis) Act 2016 and make consequential amendments to the Health Act 1937 to significantly streamline the regulatory framework for prescribing medicinal cannabis in Queensland; to amend the Public Health Act 2005 to establish the Notifiable Dust Lung Disease Register and require prescribed medical practitioners to notify the chief executive of Queensland Health about cases of notifiable dust lung disease, enable the chief executive to require a person responsible for causing a pollution event to publish a pollution notice to inform the public of potential risks to public health, and enable the standard that a person must comply with when manufacturing, selling, supplying or using paint to be prescribed by regulation rather than in the act; to amend the Radiation Safety Act 1999 to provide that certain persons are deemed to have a use or transport licence; to amend the Transplantation and Anatomy Act 1979 to clarify the provisions about research that involves removing tissue from adults and children, ensure pathology laboratories can access tissue based products that are necessary for diagnostic and quality control purposes, and remove the requirement that a post-mortem examination of a body conducted in a hospital only be held in the hospital mortuary; to amend the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 2003, the Coroners Act 2003 and the Cremations Act 2003 to enable human body parts used at a school of anatomy for the study and practice of anatomy to be lawfully cremated without a corresponding death certificate or the approval of an independent doctor; and to amend the Retirement Villages Act 1999 to clarify a recent amendment in relation to timely payment of exit entitlements at retirement villages and make associated amendments to the Duties Act 2001.

From the outset I want to make clear that the LNP will not be opposing this bill. However, we do oppose the changes in this bill that amend the Retirement Villages Act and have nothing to do with health. These amendments were needed to fix up a bungle by the Minister for Housing and Public Works and I will let the member for Burleigh speak further to those issues in greater detail.

The committee that considered this bill, the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee, recommended that the bill be passed and made no other recommendations. Non-government members of that committee did, however, provide a statement of reservations in relation to the amendments to the Retirement Villages Act. The committee heard from 43 submissions including a form submission from a further 82 individuals about silicosis.

In relation to the specific issues covered in the bill, the LNP supports the health benefits of medicinal cannabis overseen by medical practitioners to help patients where there is evidence that it will help treat certain conditions. This is when conventional methods of treatment have failed. Queensland Health provides that the scientific evidence base is limited but suggests that medicinal cannabis may be suitable to treat severe muscular spasms and other symptoms of multiple sclerosis,

chemotherapy induced nausea and vomiting, some types of epilepsy with severe seizures, and palliative care for loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting and pain. The bill reduces duplication by repealing the state legislation, making the system easier and cheaper to administer, which we support.

We also strongly support the amendments recommended by the report titled *Black lung white lies: inquiry into the re-identification of coal workers' pneumoconiosis in Queensland*. The black lung inquiry found catastrophic failings in public administration in Queensland. The select committee that authored that report recommended that cases of coal workers' pneumoconiosis and other coalmine dust lung diseases identified or diagnosed by medical professionals should be compulsorily reported to the Chief Health Officer as a notifiable disease under the Public Health Act. Let us not forget that it was thanks to a parliamentary motion moved by the LNP in the last parliament calling for a royal commission into the re-emergence of coal workers' black lung disease that led to the establishment of the select committee in the first place.

The bill amends the Public Health Act to establish a separate framework for notifications of particular occupational dust lung diseases, including coalmine dust lung diseases and silicosis. These conditions are specified by regulation. The committee was provided a copy of the draft regulation along with the bill. The re-emergence of coal workers' pneumoconiosis is an absolute tragedy. My heart goes out to those families and specifically workers who have contracted this insidious disease. Sadly, there has recently been a sudden spike in the number of confirmed cases of silicosis for workers in the engineered stone benchtop manufacturing industry. There are high levels of silica in engineered stone which can be breathed in as dust when the stone is cut dry. The government has issued a safety warning for workers and employers to cease dry cutting of engineered stone benchtop manufacturing.

As part of the review of this bill, the department confirmed that this disease was covered under the new provisions in the draft regulations for the notifiable dust register, which is important. The industrial relations minister needs to work with doctors and ensure that we get on top of the silicosis outbreak as quickly as possible. In February this year Professor Dan Chambers, a respiratory physician, called on the state to allocate \$2 million for a clinical trial to be urgently set up to develop a treatment for the disease. We understand that a clinical reference group met in March this year after a six-month delay and we trust that this group will be integral in assisting the government to respond to this serious public health issue.

My heart goes out to the family of Anthony White, a Gold Coast stonemason who recently died from silicosis. We owe it to him and to his family to act quickly. He was the first person from the engineered stone industry in Queensland to die from the deadly disease, but his family have warned that he will not be the last. An audit of the state stone industry last year found that 98 workers had contracted silicosis, with 15 of those cases considered terminal. We strongly support the provisions in the bill that cover silicosis. Queensland workers deserve to go to work in a safe environment and to come home safely every day to their friends and family. I agree with the industrial relations minister when she said that we owe it to all victims and families who are impacted by work related deaths to do everything possible to prevent further tragedies.

In relation to the Health Act and the Public Health Act, which this bill makes amendments to, I want to talk about the state of our public health system under Labor. Queenslanders deserve a world-class public health system, but the Palaszczuk government is not delivering it. Our hardworking nurses, doctors and midwives need more help on the front line to improve patient care. Ambulance ramping is back again, with massive increases. Elective surgery waiting times are blowing out. Emergency departments are overcrowded. Almost a decade after Labor's Health payroll debacle, current and former nurses are still being harassed. Major hospital upgrades in key growth areas are years away, because Labor failed to plan for the future. We saw that in today's *Courier-Mail*. It is nothing more than a broken promise.

Only last week we saw an unprecedented crisis across South-East Queensland with code yellow alerts across most major hospitals. The system was in meltdown.

Mr HARPER: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. None of this goes towards the amendments in the bill.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms McMillan): Thank you for your feedback. I remind the member to return to the long title of the bill.

Ms BATES: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am speaking in relation to the amendments to the Health Act and the Public Health Act. We have seen a sham survey to justify renaming the Lady Cilento children's hospital, where there is a reported chronic bed shortage for our sickest kids. Labor's \$20 million announcement of additional oncology beds at the Queensland Children's Hospital will not be delivered until late 2020. At the same time we have seen Labor double down on its failed digital hospital program. Despite warnings from doctors, corruption probes and a damning Auditor-General's

report late last year, which exposed a \$256 million blowout, the minister continues to have his head in the sand. Despite that, the minister labelled the report a big tick. You cannot get more arrogant and out of touch than that.

In regional Queensland, under Labor maternity services have been cut and concerns have been raised about do-it-yourself birthing kits. Regional Queensland women deserve access to proper maternity services. The LNP believes that Queenslanders deserve a world-class public health system no matter where they live and that is not happening under the Palaszczuk Labor government. As we see across most other portfolio areas, when it comes to health Labor's priorities are all wrong.

The minister has also been found wanting on the startling revelations about systemic failures by health authorities to adequately deal with and respond to concerns raised against a leading Queensland surgeon, Dr William Braun. Only yesterday I tabled letters of how a patient had written to both the former minister and the current minister about Dr Braun. Yet Labor continues to hide behind the Health Ombudsman. It is time for the minister to start listening to doctors and patients and put patient care as his priority. The Minister for Health is on borrowed time. If the Premier had any shred of leadership she would sack the incompetent health minister. It is time to stop playing politics and start prioritising patient care.