




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BONNEY

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HEALTH AND WELLBEING QUEENSLAND BILL

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (5.25 pm): I rise in support of the Health and Wellbeing Queensland Bill, finally brought to the chamber after four years of inaction from Labor, which has been covered at length by my colleagues. According to the Chief Health Officer's report last year, Queenslanders are living longer lives. However, 13 per cent of those extra years of life are lost due to ill health. GP presentations and admissions to hospitals have both increased in that time. Putting priority on preventive health is good for Queenslanders, both for their health and for our economy. Healthier Queenslanders take a big burden off our hospitals and doctors, increase productivity, reduce work absenteeism and it is what people want. It was a shame to see Labor reduce the preventive health budget in the 2018-19 budget, and again it makes me question their priorities.

The health of the people of the Gold Coast is pretty good compared to the rest of the state. I suspect this is because the Gold Coast is the best part of Queensland to live in and offers the best lifestyle. We have the lowest rates of potentially preventable hospitalisations, we have lower risk factors in children and adults, and we have a higher average age at death. There is always work to be done, and within preventable diseases and presentations there are three areas I would like to raise for increased focus.

Suicide rates have jumped in Queensland. They have increased statewide by 20 per cent over the last decade. The Queensland rate was 19 per cent higher than the national rate and 22 per cent higher for childhood suicides. My hope is that this new statutory body would see preventive mental health as a priority. Suicide and self-harm have become all too normalised, particularly with our younger people. I have spoken to many people, including friends of mine who have been personally affected, and we need better programs, campaigns and understanding to try to curb this trend. Whilst other diseases are on the decline, the suicide rate is the opposite. The lives of those left behind from suicide never recover. We must have this as a priority if we are trying to increase the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders.

Whilst the Gold Coast is well below the state rate in terms of obesity, which is a fact exemplified by my esteemed colleagues in the House from the Gold Coast who are shining examples of health and fitness, our 20 per cent rate is still far too high.

Mr Power: What about Ray?

Mr O'CONNOR: I am not taking that interjection. Greater education in schools, ways to encourage kids and young adults into active lifestyles, and targeted approaches to older Australians is needed. Across Queensland it is estimated that 33,700 tonnes would need to be lost across all obese adults to bring them into a healthy weight range. The average obese adult would need to lose 29 kilos. That is a huge feat for most, and we need to see how we can make that less of a daunting task. Greater access for adults to sporting clubs, active spaces and even gyms is needed as well as reminders to all of us about what makes up a healthy diet.

The final area I would like to talk about and raise focus on is immunisations. We are still seeing rates well below the national average for immunisations and I am concerned about the ever-growing anti-vaxxer movement that is being fuelled by the internet and social media. My hope is that the health and wellbeing commission will help join the fight against the scaremongering of anti-vaxxers and get the truth of vaccinations out there. The number of conversations I have and messages and emails I get from people who have been swayed by their arguments is absolutely staggering. At the end of the day, vaccines work and that is the end of the argument. My hope is that with this bill the government can prioritise what will make a real difference to the health of Queenslanders—to cut out the politics and increase preventive action. I commend the bill to the House.