




Speech By  
**Aaron Harper**

**MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA**

---

Record of Proceedings, 13 August 2020

**HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (12.56 pm): I cannot argue with the last part of the member for Mudgeeraba's contribution. The deputy chair has done a good job.

**Mr McArdle:** Thank you.

**Mr HARPER:** I will say, though, that it is always surprising to follow the member for Mudgeeraba. It is not surprising when they oppose, whinge and whine about health services—

**Ms Bates** interjected.

**Mr HARPER:** Hypocrisy knows no bounds, member for Mudgeeraba. The LNP sacked 1,800 nurses and midwives. I rise to make a contribution to the second reading debate of the Health Legislation Amendment Bill.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Weir): Order! I would encourage members to allow the member for Thuringowa to have the floor.

**Mr HARPER:** The Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 amends a range of acts with objectives of implementing policy initiatives and improving the effective operation of those acts. The bill proposes amendments to the Queensland Ambulance Service Act 1991, Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011, Queensland Mental Health Commission Act 2013, Private Health Facilities Act 1999, Public Health Act 2005, Private Health Facilities Regulation 2016 and Public Health Regulation 2018.

The bill was referred to our committee on 28 November 2019, with a reporting deadline of 21 February 2020. The committee requested and received a written brief from Queensland Health about the bill which we published for the information of stakeholders, and we thank all those stakeholders. We accepted 153 submissions. Most submissions focused on the proposed amendments to the Public Health Act 2005 to prohibit the practice of conversion therapy by health service providers. The committee considered the views raised by submitters at hearings.

There are key reforms of the bill that warrant particular mention. Amendments to the Hospital and Health Boards Act and the Ambulance Service Act are designed to strengthen the governance of the state's public health system. This is a massive health system that comprises the Department of Health, the Queensland Ambulance Service and 16 hospital and health services that deliver fantastic health services right across the state of Queensland. It is timely to acknowledge all health professionals in Queensland Health and, of course, the Queensland Ambulance Service, particularly in their health response to COVID-19.

The amendments proposed in the bill give effect to recommendations from an independent expert panel appointed by the government. Submitters and witnesses to our inquiry unanimously supported the proposed amendments to strengthen coordination and cooperation across the health system and to improve outcomes for patients as well as staff. The bill also amends the Hospital and Health Boards Act to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people a direct and fairer say in how health services

are delivered by each of the state's hospital and health services. The amendments will require that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives are appointed to all 16 hospital and health service boards. This is a significant and highly symbolic reform to improve the delivery of health services for all Queenslanders.

Finally, the bill provides amendments to the Public Health Act to prohibit, for the first time in Australia, the provision of conversion therapies by health service providers. The term 'conversion therapy' covers a raft of treatments that attempt to change or suppress a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. The committee heard throughout the inquiry that these often clandestine therapies are condemned by health and other bodies around the world for the psychological harm, high rates of suicide, self-harm and other adverse health outcomes they cause their victims. In his response to the recommendations the minister provided clarity and a definition of 'conversion therapy'. I thank the minister for providing that. I support the bill and commend the bill to the House.