




Speech By  
**Barry O'Rourke**

**MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON**

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Record of Proceedings, 13 August 2020

### **HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr O'ROURKE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (3.35 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. While the bill addresses several areas, I will discuss the amendments to the Health and Hospital Boards Act regarding health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by delivering a responsible, capable and culturally appropriate healthcare system.

As members would be aware, there have been numerous improvements in the health system to address the inequities that exist between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and non-Aboriginal and non-Torres Strait Islander Australians. Under the National Indigenous Reform Agreement, states and territories have committed to achieving six targets for closing the gap in health, education and employment outcomes. The two health-specific targets are to close the gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life expectancy and to halve the gap in mortality rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children under five.

In Queensland, the life expectancy gap is currently estimated at 7.8 years for males and 6.7 years for females. The three leading drivers of the life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and other Queenslanders which, taken together, explain over half of the gap are: cardiovascular disease—an estimated 21 per cent of the gap for males and females; cancer—an estimated 20 per cent of the gap for males and 18 per cent for females; and diabetes—an estimated 13 per cent of the gap for males and 18 per cent for females.

This bill requires the hospital and health service to have a strategy in place for achieving health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and, importantly, to have one or more Aboriginal persons on the board. Through these amendments, health and wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will be at the forefront of the delivery of health services.

I take this opportunity to thank our health and hospital services staff across Queensland and also our QAS staff for the great job they do each and every day in looking after Queenslanders. I also thank the committee secretariat and other committee members. I commend the bill to the House.