




Speech By
Adrian Tantari

MEMBER FOR HERVEY BAY

Record of Proceedings, 14 October 2022

MENTAL HEALTH SELECT COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr TANTARI** (Hervey Bay—ALP) (3.56 pm): I rise to add my contribution to this debate on the Mental Health Select Committee report. It goes without saying that mental health is one of the most pressing issues of our society today. It is with us all every day. Mental health as a condition is not just an issue of the day. It has been with us for as long as humans have walked on this earth but, finally, as an issue, in the 21st century mental health is now well and truly out in the open. No longer do people need to suffer in silence. No longer do they have to hide their illness, embarrassed that they may be seen as weak or feeble. No longer do they have to hide in the background, afraid of what people may think or say about their illness.

Whilst we in this place recognise that this may be the case, sadly society today is still catching up on the impacts of the various forms that this illness can inflict. While sufferers no longer have to suffer in silence, for some the stigma of having the illness still weighs heavily on them and their families and loved ones. For sufferers this is typically hard. There is still, even today, an undercurrent that when people identify with this illness it can be seen by some as a form of weakness, something that you should suck up and move on with. Because, by and large, the visual signs of a sufferer are not easily recognisable, people think everything is normal with that person. Unfortunately, this still happens today. This still exists amongst those who do not want to acknowledge that this illness is an epidemic throughout the world and our collective societies.

The report we are debating here today clearly shows that there is a lot of work to be done in the mental health space. That is not denying the work already done to date by governments now and those in the past, but there is still a lot more work to be done to help sufferers. We all know someone who has had a mental illness in the past. Estimates today are that 45 per cent of our population will at some stage be affected by mental illness. Indeed, I know, whilst never discussed, that my own mother was an individual who did suffer from mental illness during her lifetime, but for her it was an era when mental illness was not discussed which was very hard for my family.

I, too, have had lived experience of mental illness in my past. It was debilitating. Your judgement of things that are important is impaired. You live a life of existence and survival. Days roll away into weeks and you barely notice it. Life is dark. For some, sadly, there is no return from that darkness. For others, like me, there is light in the form of loving support from family, friends and service providers.

It is our role as legislators to ensure that we do the best we can so that people who have mental illnesses have access to support, and this select committee report does that with its 57 recommendations ranging across a broad spectrum of what we know as mental illness. I would like to thank the select committee for coming to Hervey Bay to listen to people who have worked in my electorate to address our community's mental health issues.

I would like to acknowledge Tanya Stevenson from the Hervey Bay Neighbourhood Centre; Darren Bosley and Peter Grumley from Fraser Coast Mates; Debra Gibson and Trevor Matthews from Flourish; and Steve Ober from Galangoor Primary Healthcare Services. I want to thank them for

attending the committee hearings in Hervey Bay and for telling their stories about mental health support on the Fraser Coast. I also want to thank the Palaszczuk government for acknowledging that in the Fraser Coast region we, like everywhere else, do have the need for mental health services and for moving quickly to support rural and regional areas with support services and facilities across Queensland—facilities like the Palaszczuk Labor government's commitment of \$39 million to build a brand new 22-bed acute mental health unit at the Hervey Bay Hospital which will soon be available to assist patients in early 2023. I had the pleasure of joining the committee when they visited the under-construction new mental health unit and offshoot facilities like the Oasis Room retreat that is currently helping patients and their relatives who come to the Hervey Bay Hospital's emergency department.

I want to put on record my congratulations to the select committee for the invaluable work they put into this report, and I say this with genuine intent to every committee member who visited Hervey Bay: for showing a focused interest and enthusiasm for wanting to understand the level at which mental health impacts the community, thank you to you all. I want to congratulate the select committee chair, the member for Greenslopes, and the committee secretariat for the massive body of work that has been undertaken in the preparation of this report. The report is extensive and the recommendations are many. It will be good to see what outcomes come from these recommendations. Whatever they may be, I can see a brighter future for people in Queensland who suffer with mental health because of the work that has been done by the select committee. I again want to thank the Premier and Joe Kelly, the member for Greenslopes, for instigating this. I commend the report to the House.