




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (4.06 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill before the House. Before I make my contribution, I want to thank our many health professionals, particularly those who work in hospitals on the border. We have had a situation where the Palaszczuk Labor government has not been able to get doctors to a number of those hospitals, for instance, Mungindi, Cunnamulla, Quilpie and Augathella. The health professionals have kept the doors of those hospitals open. I commend them for the work that they have done. It has been a difficult situation for them. I would like to see the government providing more support to get doctors into those communities. Certainly over Christmas it was not an ideal situation at Cunnamulla when they did not have a doctor in that community. In the past four months, Quilpie has probably had more days without a doctor at the hospital than with a doctor. I call on the government to look very closely at that and make sure that we have a doubled-down effort to get doctors into the smaller regional hospitals.

As outlined earlier, the LNP will not be opposing the bill. The bill amends nine acts to improve the operation of the Health portfolio and support the provision of health services in Queensland. I thank the committee members and the secretariat for their work in considering the bill. That brings me to the committee's recommendation No. 2. The committee recommended that the minister, during the second reading debate, provide detail on how instances of environmental nuisance relating to a ministerial infrastructure designation as exempted by the amendment would be investigated and regulated. The ministerial infrastructure designations are used regularly. They are used for hospitals, schools, fire stations and ambulance stations. I can recall a number of them being used for fire and ambulance stations across my electorate and I fought very hard for that new infrastructure.

In their report the parliamentary committee noted a situation at Logan involving a hospital that was approved under a ministerial infrastructure designation. The only way to carry out works was to do so overnight, meaning that there would be noise outside the 6.30 am to 6.30 pm proposal. The committee asked a very good question about how that designated infrastructure with an exemption would be investigated and regulated. I ask the minister to clearly outline how that would be done by the state government. I hope the state government will not be cost shifting those investigations and regulations onto local government. I look forward to the minister's giving an assurance that there will be no cost shift or regulation shift to the local governments for these investigations and regulations as a result of this amendment.

I do urge caution with this amendment, because tucked away on page 29 of the explanatory notes are the details regarding the lack of consultation. The explanatory notes state—

The Bill has been informed by consultation with stakeholders over a number of years, with the exception of the amendments to the Environmental Protection Act.

The explanatory notes further state—

In September 2021, targeted consultation was undertaken with key stakeholders on the Bill. Stakeholders consulted included representatives from the medical, nursing, pharmaceutical, mental health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sectors. At this time, the Bill did not include the amendments to the Environmental Protection Act.

We have seen enough of the two-minute-to-midnight amendments that cause great concern and difficulty for local governments. We have to make sure there are no adverse outcomes from the Labor government from these sorts of amendments, especially for the local government sector.

When there is a noise complaint, constituents often call their local councillor or their local council. It concerns me that these councils have not been consulted in relation to this particular amendment. This is quite an extraordinary power. If unchecked or taken advantage of, it could prove to be against community interest. We all know too well that this Labor government has given up on integrity. When governments give up on integrity, they give up on consulting on a lot of these issues.

The bill amends further pieces of legislation which impact the health portfolio—the Ambulance Service Act 1991 and the Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011—to enable more allied health professionals to access the Viewer, Queensland Health’s patient information system. This will allow certain designated persons and prescribed health professionals to disclose confidential information to a person performing functions under the Mental Health Act 2016. There is a need for Queensland Health, in consultation with the relevant providers, to deliver a comprehensive and accessible engagement campaign to inform the community about what health information is available on the Viewer, who can access their health information and what options they have to control it. The public will want to know what this change means: who can access what, when, where and why.

However, the track record of Labor governments with IT is seriously lacking. Labor has not done well in implementing IT projects within the health system. Unfortunately, that poor form relates to a waste of taxpayer dollars. For instance, the electronic medical record project blew out by close to \$300 million and has been on ice for years now. Then there was the \$70 million pathology system that was mothballed. Then there was the \$135 million purchasing system which blew up when it was turned on. Of course, there is the icing on the cake: the Queensland Health payroll debacle, where the Labor government did not pay the doctors and nurses. That \$1.25 billion is gone forever.

The LNP will be watching and holding the Labor government to account with the expansion of the Viewer system. The Office of the Information Commissioner and the Privacy Commissioner provided a joint submission which identified ongoing needs to strengthen privacy and security safeguards around health information technology systems. Given the Labor government picks and chooses what advice it accepts—it says it takes the health advice but will not take the Integrity Commissioner’s advice—we will see where this advice lands, although if it is independent public advice then I do not like the chances.

The bill also provides a number of amendments to the Mental Health Act 2016 and the Public Health (Infection Control for Personal Appearance Services) Act 2003 to improve the process for renewing licences for higher risk personal appearance services. The amendments increase the time frame for when a person can apply to renew a licence prior to its expiry from at least one month to 60 days. That will be of assistance to local governments that consider these licenses. These licences are assessed by the local government and involve but are not limited to beauty therapy, application of cosmetics, manicure, pedicure, epilation including by electrolysis or hot or cold wax, body piercing and hairdressing, to name a few examples.

The bill also provides amendments to the Radiation Safety Act 1999, the Termination of Pregnancy Act 2018 and the Criminal Code Act 1899 enabling those undertaking a clinical placement with a health service to assist in the termination of pregnancy. With regard to this amendment, the minister must make it very clear that it will not be compulsory for students to assist with or observe terminations of pregnancy in order to complete their qualifications. There should be no forced requirement for clinical students to observe or assist in terminations of pregnancy, and those with conscientious objections should be appropriately supported.

The bill also amends the Transplantation and Anatomy Act 1979 to exclude human milk from the definition of ‘tissue’ in the act to ensure sick and pre-term infants can be efficiently provided donated human milk to prevent and treat serious health conditions. I look forward to hearing the minister’s explanation in her summing up of the matters I have raised, particularly those in relation to local government.