




Speech By
Barry O'Rourke

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Record of Proceedings, 24 February 2022

HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr O'ROURKE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (12.07 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. Through the committee process, this bill has been informed by working with a cross-section of health professionals, doctors, nursing, pharmaceutical, mental health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sectors, as well as government agencies and statutory offices.

This bill is about improving the health system and will support the health services provided in Queensland. The bill will make a range of amendments to the Mental Health Act. The act regulates the treatment and care provided to people with mental illness, including those who do not have capacity to consent to treatment. It is essential that the Mental Health Act respects and promotes the rights of persons who require involuntary treatment for their mental illness.

The bill will amend the Hospital and Health Boards Act to allow additional categories of allied health professionals who may access the Viewer. The Viewer is Queensland's read-only web based system that displays a central place to view patient health information.

The Palaszczuk government has a proud track record of investing in frontline services and infrastructure so that Queenslanders receive quality care no matter where they live. Having travelled overseas, I know firsthand that we have a world-class health system.

In Central Queensland we have hired more frontline health staff across the region, including 285 nurses, 47 doctors and 47 health professionals over the past few years. As a comparison, over the last 12 months from November 2020 in Central Queensland, we have 354 doctors. By November 2021, we had 363 doctors—that is 11 more.

Last month in Rockhampton, we welcomed 41 new medical interns who are launching the next stage of their medical career. They were part of the 795 new junior doctors who joined the front healthcare line throughout January to strengthen Queensland's public health system.

I return to the nurses. In November 2020 we had 1,511 nurses; now we have 1,638, 127 more. Then we had 300 health professionals; now we have 310, 10 more. These increases were in just one year of a four-year election term. We deliver on health care. There is also \$31 million for the expansion of the Rockhampton Hospital that will enhance health services for Central Queensland and support 90 local construction jobs. We are delivering \$18.2 million for the Rockhampton Hospital cardiac hybrid theatre and \$12.8 million for the Rockhampton Hospital mental health ward expansion.

We also just completed a \$16 million alcohol and other drugs rehabilitation centre. This is a 42-bed residential service in Rockhampton with eight places for withdrawal, 22 for individual rehabilitation and two family units to allow parents to stay with their children while accessing treatment. It was great that local firm Woollam Constructions used local contractors and suppliers wherever possible, creating 48 local construction jobs. Lives Lived Well is a community provider managing the wonderful services. They have already created links across the community to ensure the best outcomes are achieved.

I also want to thank the health and hospital district staff. They have done an absolutely wonderful job during the pandemic. My son Harry is a registered nurse and he has been working at the hub for the last 12 to 18 months. He is a frontline worker, which is really great to see, and there are so many dedicated workers in our health system. I pay respect to them and thank them for the work they do on behalf of our community.

Finally, I would like to thank the committee for their work in pulling this bill together. This bill ensures people are treated with respect and dignity when they receive treatment and receive the best possible health outcomes. I commend the bill to the House.