




Speech By
Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

Record of Proceedings, 27 October 2022

MENTAL HEALTH SELECT COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (3.02 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on report No. 1 of the Mental Health Select Committee titled *Inquiry into the opportunities to improve mental health outcomes for Queenslanders*. I would firstly like to very much thank the committee for holding a regional hearing in Kingaroy on 20 April and for allowing me to participate. I note that the member for Moggill and the member for Whitsunday encouraged the committee to come out to Kingaroy. I thank you very much.

It was very important that the South Burnett community were heard by the Mental Health Select Committee. Unfortunately, the region suffers from the impact of limited access to mental health services. This has unfortunately resulted in the highest suicide rate in Queensland. The Kingaroy hearing was a chance to explain the significant barriers our community faces when they need mental health support, along with other factors which also impact people such as no public transport, no locally-based paediatrician and the distance to specialist services.

I take this opportunity to thank our local agencies that took part in the hearing, including: Nina Temperton, Nick and Leanne from South Burnett CTC; Margie Hams; Michael Sanford from Bunyarra Counselling; and Damo Martoo from the Kingaroy Chamber of Commerce and Industry who gave an incredibly moving submission. The evidence that they presented was powerful. I was pleased to see their contributions about the direct impact of suicide of family members inform the committee's report. They were able to shine a light on the gaps in mental health services in our region and the lack of mental health professionals, resulting in the burnout of the overworked staff we have. One of the themes that came out of the hearing is that timely, face-to-face support for people who need mental health care is key.

I will read some of the important comments from the Kingaroy hearing that were included in the report. Importantly, Michael Sanford from Bunyarra Counselling told the committee of the barriers to seeking help in rural and regional areas. I would encourage everyone to have a look at his submission. It was very good. He stated—

... we are looking at everyday workers, students, tradesmen and farmers who are taking their own lives and struggling with mental health. These are often the ones who do not have the capacity to reach out and get support because they are normally working 12- to 14-hour days. They cannot get into town. They cannot drive 100 kilometres to access support. There is also a pride factor in reaching out and going to get these supports too, so a lot of this support is about reducing stigma and creating education.

Damo Martoo spoke about the sad and tragic loss of his son Jack. He stated—

The Kingaroy Chamber of Commerce & Industry has been going deeply into mental wellbeing and mental health services within the region over the last 12 months through direct impacts to our chamber through people who have suicided. I myself personally lost my own son

and Bronnie's son Jack—

just before Christmas to suicide. This is a really important opportunity for the state government to see the impact mental health is having on not just the community but the business community as well and the flow-on effects into people's personal lives. It just does not stop immediately after you lose your child. This is a forever issue now not only for me but for my business community and my entire family.

I know this reduced the entire committee to tears. I want to give a shout-out to every single committee member because this was really moving.

I have always held the belief that just because we choose to live in a regional area it does not mean we should accept poorer health outcomes. This was especially relevant when it comes to access to mental health services by people from all parts of our community, from our farmers to our young people, to our families, to our business owners, to the people who work in the businesses, to the power station workers who are losing their jobs, to the Tarong mine workers who are losing their jobs. They all deserve support from the Palaszczuk government.

I note that there are many recommendations. I support the dissenting report because we know the truth behind the reason for this report. Mental health in regional Queensland needs to be looked into more.

(Time expired)