




Speech By  
**Joan Pease**

**MEMBER FOR LYTTON**

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## **HEALTH PRACTITIONER REGULATION NATIONAL LAW AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (4.26 pm): I rise to speak to the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I acknowledge the chair of the Health and Environment Committee, the member for Thuringowa, Aaron Harper, for his work, together with my colleagues on the committee for the participation and the hard work that went into the review of this bill. I also acknowledge the secretariat and thank them for their hard work on this bill. I also acknowledge the 40 submitters and the departments and witnesses who attended our public committee hearings. I thank them all for engaging in the committee system and appreciate their expertise, passion and knowledge in this space. Like my colleagues before me, I acknowledge the great work of the health workers across the system and thank them for their dedication and professionalism under very difficult circumstances, particularly during the COVID pandemic. I acknowledge their great work and thank them for their continued efforts.

Throughout the course of the inquiry the committee heard significant stakeholder concerns regarding the national law's proposal to allow for the restricted use of testimonial advertising in relation to cosmetic surgery services. As a consequence of this significant stakeholder feedback, the Health and Environment Committee did recommend in our report that the minister await the conclusion of the independent review of the regulation of health practitioners in cosmetic surgery. I note the minister's advice that after the release of that review there was unanimous agreement from all Australian health ministers to withdraw the relevant provisions from the bill so that further consideration of this matter could occur. That is really great news, and it is a good indication of a government that listens. We listened to the concerns of the stakeholders that participated in the committee process. That is another great indication that our committee process does work. I thank the minister for her willingness to listen to our committee, and I look forward to this important matter being examined further.

When the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for health professionals commenced, Australian health ministers committed to continually review the scheme to ensure it remains up to date and fit for purpose. The reviews in the bill build on earlier amendments to the national law to ensure the national scheme continues to meet its objectives. Many of the reforms were recommended following the independent review of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for health professionals. Other reforms in the bill are based on subsequent reviews of the national scheme's governance and accreditation systems or address other priority issues identified by health ministers. Broadly, the reforms will update and improve the regulation of Australian health professionals by strengthening public safety and confidence in the provision of health services, improving the governance of the national scheme and enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the scheme.

The bill implements a wide range of reforms touching on many aspects of the national scheme. Key amendments to the national law to strengthen public safety and confidence in health services include making public protection and confidence paramount considerations in the law's administration; adding a new guiding principle and objective to support a culturally safe health workforce that is

responsible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; empowering national boards to withdraw a practitioner's registration if it was obtained by providing false or misleading information; empowering Ahpra and the national boards to issue interim prohibition orders to unregistered practitioners to mitigate serious risks to the public; mandating reporting of scheduled medicine offences; empowering Ahpra and the national boards to make a public statement about a person where there is a reasonable belief that the person poses a serious risk to others; broadening regulators' powers to disclose information to protect the public; and increase penalties for advertising offences.

To improve the governance, effectiveness and efficiency of the national scheme, the bill will enable national boards to refer matters to other entities following a preliminary assessment such as state health complaints entities like our OHO, medicines and poisons regulators or a state employer; expand the use of voluntary undertakings; enable the ministerial council to delegate its power to approve registration standards; and update the functions of Ahpra to reflect current practice.

As I said, the objectives of the bill are to amend the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, otherwise known as the national law, as agreed by Australian health ministers on 18 February 2022. These are sensible amendments to strengthen public safety and confidence in the provision of health services, improve the governance of the national registration and accreditation scheme for the health profession under the national scheme, and enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the national scheme. I commend the bill to the House.