




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MACKAY

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HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (3.23 pm): I am pleased to contribute to the debate and give my support to the passage of the Health and Other Legislation Bill 2021. This bill will amend a number of health acts to support the delivery of high-quality health care in Queensland. I thank stakeholders and the State Development and Regional Industries Committee for their comprehensive consideration of the bill. The Minister for Health and Ambulance Services and Leader of the House has already outlined the major amendments contained in this bill. I will take this opportunity to highlight some considerations regarding the Viewer and to comment on the Mental Health Act amendments.

There has been much discussion of the bill's amendments to enable more categories of allied health professionals to access the Viewer. The purpose of these amendments is to improve health outcomes for Queenslanders. The read-only information on the Viewer can already be requested by allied health professionals, for example, by submitting requests in writing. However, this is a manual process and it takes time. We know how important information sharing is across many sectors, not just in health care. When information is not shared efficiently, opportunities are lost. Of course, there must be privacy safeguards in place.

Queensland Health already has a stringent pre-access registration process, terms and conditions of access and auditing scheme for the Viewer. A health professional must also enter specific patient details into the system before any records are made available to ensure that a relationship exists between the patient and the professional. Unauthorised access by a practitioner can lead to the loss of access to the Viewer, an investigation by the Health Ombudsman, criminal prosecution and a hefty fine of 600 penalty points, which currently equates to \$82,710. All of these safeguards will apply to the new cohort of allied health professionals that are proposed to be able to access information on the Viewer.

I now turn to the amendments to the Mental Health Act. As the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services said, the act has been found to be implemented well. It already takes an approach that supports human rights. The bill makes targeted amendments to improve the operation of some provisions and strengthen the consideration of patients' rights when making certain decisions. These amendments were developed in consultation with stakeholders. I note that in its submission to the committee, the Queensland Law Society commended Queensland Health and the government for the manner in which they engaged and consulted with stakeholders in the formation of the bill.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to delivering high-quality mental health services in Queensland. Each year the Queensland government invests approximately \$1.8 billion in mental health. Last week we announced a new \$8 million program to support a pilot of on demand mental health support services for young people. Let's not forget the \$74.5 million that was invested in the mental health and wellbeing package to respond to the mental health demands of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In my electorate the refurbishment of the Mackay community mental health facility, a \$6.6 million investment, will provide a safe and private clinical environment for patients. It will deliver clinical spaces that improve patient management and provide clear and safe separation of clinical and public access from staff-only areas.

The White Cloud Foundation has launched its Meals for Mums and telehealth services in Mackay. The Queensland government has committed to providing \$250,000 to support the expansion of the White Cloud Foundation's Meals for Mums program. This funding will enable its program to be extended to regional areas outside South-East Queensland. Meals for Mums provide important telehealth services that will complement the existing mental health services in Mackay.

This government also established the Mental Health Select Committee to conduct an inquiry into opportunities to improve mental health outcomes for Queenslanders. We look forward to receiving the recommendations from that inquiry. I note that the select committee will be provided with suggestions from stakeholders for mental health reform which are outside the scope of this bill from the State Development and Regional Industries Committee to consider. With Queensland's new satellite hospitals reaching their milestones, it is timely that this bill will amend the Environmental Protection Act to ensure that essential community infrastructure such as satellite hospitals may be constructed to operate outside the environmental nuisance limits of the Environmental Protection Act if regulated by an infrastructure designation made by the planning minister under the Planning Act 2016. The amendment gives the planning minister the same powers as an assessment manager for a development application.

The people of Queensland recognise the Palaszczuk government's commitment to health care, which is why they supported our \$265 million commitment at the 2020 election to build seven satellite hospitals. Our Satellite Hospitals Program is a reflection of how our government innovates and is focused on delivering health care closer to home and meeting the changing health care needs of the community.

I will briefly note some of the other important reforms in this bill. The bill will amend the Ambulance Service Act to ensure that the framework for managing confidential information is robust, clear for officers and aligned with the Hospital and Health Boards Act. It will also remove the requirement for the Queensland Ambulance Service Commissioner to be no more than 65 years of age.

The bill will remove the prescriptive identity verification requirements in the Radiation Safety Act. These will be addressed through departmental policies, informed by the Commonwealth Department of Home Affairs best practice guidelines for identity verification. The amendments in this bill are the result of extensive consultation, and stakeholders have described them as workable and practical. I take this opportunity to thank all health workers who cared for our communities before and during the pandemic. Thank you for your work. I commend this bill to the House.