




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MACKAY

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

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (2.22 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the bill and to give my support to the passage of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. The bill contains the second stage of amendments to the national law and includes a range of significant reforms, including important measures to protect the public and to ensure the national scheme remains effective and up to date. I thank stakeholders and the Health and Environment Committee for its comprehensive consideration of the bill.

The Minister for Health and Ambulance Services and Leader of the House has already outlined major amendments to the bill so I will take this opportunity to highlight some considerations regarding the introduction of the new principle and objective of cultural safety. Improving the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our nation is a priority. To achieve this, states and territories must continue to work together to promote better health outcomes and health equity. As part of the national commitment to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and close the gap, the bill introduces a new guiding principle and objective which aims to support the delivery of culturally appropriate and high-quality health services. We know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples face unique challenges in the healthcare system. For them good health is more than the absence of disease or illness; it is a holistic concept that includes physical, social, emotional, cultural and spiritual wellbeing for both the individual and the community.

The national scheme and the health practitioners have had an important role to play in resolving past inequities and improving the health of our First Nations people. This important amendment will acknowledge the national scheme's role in improving culturally safe and respectful health services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as well as the elimination of racism in the provision of health services.

The guiding principle will also require national scheme entities to consider how regulatory decisions may impact the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their confidence in the safety of health services. Equity has been a key focus of health reform over recent years and a priority into the future.

In August of this year the Palaszczuk government launched the historic start of the formal Path to Treaty in Queensland. This was an important landmark occasion for Queenslanders and a significant step forward on the path towards recognition and reconciliation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the state. In line with the Palaszczuk government's commitment to Closing the Gap, the new guiding principles will provide direct levers to influence cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. For example, this may include minimum levels of practice that registered health practitioners must meet and setting standards for educational courses that lead to registration. In this way the national scheme can contribute to real change on the path to achieving health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

I would like to congratulate and thank our Indigenous liaison workers in our hospitals ensuring that there is support for patients and staff to deliver culturally appropriate care—people like Philip Kemp in Mackay, a Yuwi elder. He is respected in our community and is providing a cultural bridge at Mackay Base Hospital. In my region we boast of being an integrated, multicultural community. At each citizenship ceremony the mayor announces the number of countries our new citizens have come from since 2012. We now have over 90 different ethnic backgrounds that call Mackay home. Some of these people work in our health system. They are very good health practitioners. As members can see, we have an exciting but complicated mix of cultures working in our health system. It is important that the work of Philip Kemp and others continues.

Before I finish, I would like to have a proud aunty moment. In my family we are usually tradies or teachers. In November my niece Lauren, a proud young woman of Torres Strait Islander heritage, will graduate from medicine. Lauren already has a nursing degree. She has done a lot of community nursing. She is a great example for our young First Nations people that there is a wonderful career in medicine out there waiting for them. Good luck, Lauren, in your future career. I would like to say thank you to all of our wonderful health workers who are doing such a wonderful job in our Queensland health system. I commend the bill to the House.