




Speech By  
**Lance McCallum**

**MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA**

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### **HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr McCALLUM** (Bundamba—ALP) (3.56 pm): I rise in support of the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill which supports the continued provision of world-class health services across Queensland. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge all of our health heroes who have gone above and beyond time and again throughout the course of this health pandemic, with the latest significant challenging period being over Christmas and New Year and throughout January as we met the challenge of the Omicron wave. Whether it is our local health staff out in Ipswich, the Goodna public health unit, whether it is people working at testing centres, whether it is our GPs who have been administering vaccinations or our local community pharmacies, I would like to publicly extend mine and the Bundamba community's gratitude for their outstanding work.

While this bill makes amendments to a range of bills, I will focus my remarks mainly on the amendments proposed for the Ambulance Service Act, the Hospital and Health Boards Act and the confidentiality provisions around the Mental Health Act. The Palaszczuk government has a proud and proven track record of investing in frontline services and infrastructure so that all Queenslanders can continue to receive quality health care no matter where they live. We have a world-class public health system and we are committed to keeping it that way. Our record \$22.2 billion investment in health is about recruiting record numbers of frontline health staff, building new and upgraded health infrastructure and continuing to protect the state throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. It is this health infrastructure that is going to benefit from some of the provisions that are contained within this bill, as the planning minister and Deputy Premier made clear during his contribution to this debate.

We are investing in our local clinical workforce with an extra 9,475 frontline health staff, including 5,800 nurses and midwives, 1,500 doctors and 1,700 new allied health professionals over the next four years. Once again, these health professionals, particularly some of the allied health professionals, will be affected by some of the amendments in this act around the Hospital and Health Boards Act.

There is significant ongoing investment in bricks-and-mortar projects with a \$1.352 billion capital spend that will continue to improve health care for communities across the entire state. For my community, in Ipswich health funding has increased by a staggering 64 per cent under the Palaszczuk Labor government. Our \$750.5 million investment in Ipswich health includes over \$100 million for construction projects to expand and improve facilities at the Ipswich Hospital precinct, including a new 50-bed acute mental health unit—and I will come more to the topic of mental health later in my contribution when I deal with the amendments to the Mental Health Act. There is a \$7.2 million contribution towards a 26-bed expansion at the Ipswich Hospital and \$5.3 million to secure additional bed capacity on top of that. There is also initial funding towards a brand new dedicated alcohol and drug rehabilitation centre.

In a huge boost for our local community, South Ripley will be home to one of our brand new satellite hospitals to be built at Barrams Road. The delivery of that hospital will be made easier and facilitated by amendments in this bill. In fact, early works are underway right now at the 2.7-hectare site for this community healthcare facility that will include ambulatory, low-acute and day therapy services

and other services such as renal analysis, chemotherapy, complex wound management and urgent care for minor illness and injury. Our local community will be further supported by a \$177 million investment for a 174 public bed expansion at the Springfield hospital.

We are also delivering \$3 million to progress a new ambulance station at Ripley. Recently it was great to see the concept designs for the new Ripley ambulance station, which is progressing and is well underway. Those designs went out for community consultation. All of that means more world-class health services closer to home in my local community.

The amendments to the Ambulance Services Act seek to strengthen safeguards around the disclosure of confidential information and reduce the potential for confusion about interaction with the Hospital and Health Boards Act. Under the Ambulance Services Act, the director-general of Queensland Health has the power to authorise a designated officer, for example, an ambulance officer, to disclose confidential information in certain situations, including to assist in averting a serious risk to the life, health or safety of a person or in public-interest circumstances. However, under the Ambulance Services Act that is not possible. That power cannot be delegated.

Currently, the Queensland Ambulance Service commissioner cannot authorise his or her own designated officers to disclose confidential information, even if the commissioner is satisfied that it is in the public interest or would assist in averting a serious risk to the life, health or safety of a person. Clearly that is inconsistent with the practical operation of the Queensland Ambulance Service, where the commissioner, rather than the director-general of Queensland Health, has oversight and direction of the Ambulance Service's operations. In accordance with the role of the Ambulance Service commissioner, the bill aims to allow the commissioner to authorise ambulance officers to be able to disclose that information in limited important circumstances such as I have outlined.

The amendments also remove an age restriction for the Ambulance Service commissioner. Currently the Ambulance Service Act stipulates that a person is disqualified from being appointed or from continuing in the role as the commissioner of the Ambulance Service when that person is or attains the age of 65 years. I am glad to see that that is being addressed.

**Mr Harper** interjected.

**Mr McCALLUM:** It is time for the member for Thuringowa to ascend to that lofty position? I take this opportunity to formally congratulate Commissioner Craig Emery ASM who was recently appointed as the new Ambulance Service commissioner. Commissioner Emery has spent over 30 years in a long and notable career with the QAS since joining in 1990 as a paramedic when the service was known as the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade.

As a government we have committed to delivering record numbers of paramedics across the state, with an additional 60 on top of our commitment to delivering 475, taking the total number of new paramedics in Queensland to at least 535. The Ambulance Service has experienced an extraordinary growth in demand and our continued investment in more paramedics, stations and resources will help ensure that our ambulance services are as responsive as ever to our communities' needs.

The bill amends the Hospital and Health Boards Act by replacing the definition of 'prescribed health practitioner' with 'prescribed health professional'. This will enable allied health professionals who are not registered practitioners under the national law to access Queensland's Viewer, the patient healthcare information system. That has been covered in depth by many other speakers.

I conclude by saying that ultimately this bill is going to support the continued world-class healthcare delivery for all Queenslanders. It strengthens and streamlines existing acts and it builds on our record health budget—a budget that includes record numbers of frontline staff and new and upgraded infrastructure across our state. It comes as we continue our safe and strong recovery from the COVID pandemic and it supports our health workers, who have done such an outstanding job in keeping Queenslanders safe. I commend the bill to the House.