




Speech By  
**Hon. Mark Furner**

**MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE**

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

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (11.52 am): I rise to make a brief contribution to the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I am proud to be part of a government that always values the health of Queenslanders. It was this government, after all, that restored the savage cuts to frontline health made by those opposite, when 4,400 health workers were brutally sacked, including 177 preventative health staff working in our public health units—the same public health units that were vital to our COVID-19 response. Imagine what those opposite would have done if they had had their hands on the tillers of government when steering our community through this unprecedented pandemic.

We did have some insight—like when they called for the borders to be opened 64 times as the virus was peaking interstate and we were yet to have access to the vaccine. We had another insight when the now Leader of the Opposition referred to our now Governor, then CHO, Dr Jeannette Young, as a ‘punch-drunk bureaucrat’. Thankfully, it is this government, under the leadership of the Premier who is always listening to the health advice of our Chief Health Officer, which is supporting stronger health care in this state. It is this government that is building new hospitals, hiring more frontline staff and delivering more beds. On this side of the House, we are proud of our track record when it comes to supporting our health system. This is another important, albeit technical, part of this government’s enduring commitment to deliver the best health care for all Queenslanders.

At its heart, this bill is all about ensuring that Queenslanders continue to receive the best health care. I take this opportunity to thank all of the people who make up our incredible Queensland health system—those on the front line and those behind the scenes. No matter what your role is, you are valued by this government and we thank you for choosing a career that cares for the health of Queenslanders. Every day in Queensland, thousands of people receive amazing and free care from hardworking clinicians. At no other time has our community’s health network been more in the spotlight than in the last few years. We know that COVID-19 has had a huge impact on health care in this state and around the world. We also know that our health system expands beyond just what happens in the four walls of a hospital. I also take a moment to recognise hardworking GPs, pharmacists, aged-care workers and allied health professionals—our speech pathologists, audiologists and social workers. Thank you. You are all such an important part of our health system.

When considering this bill, it is important to recognise that there are so many people and professions who make up our health system in Queensland. It should be a collaborative effort. This is a bill that will see allied health professionals able to access the Viewer. It will lead to better outcomes for Queensland patients, while safeguarding their privacy. It is a sensible amendment—one that will be welcomed by the profession.

I note the contribution made by the OIC with respect to the need to ensure the privacy of individuals who are receiving care. I am heartened by the undertaking of Queensland Health that they will work with Health Consumers Queensland to ensure that consumers are aware of their rights in this regard. Health Consumers Queensland are an invaluable asset to this state. Under the energetic

leadership of Melissa Fox, they provide unparalleled insight into issues confronting everyday Queenslanders who engage with our health system. Consumer advocacy and representation is always critical in a modern and responsive healthcare system, but it is needed now more than ever. I want to thank Health Consumers Queensland not just for their engagement on this issue but for all they do, particularly during this pandemic.

The bill also makes some amendments to the Mental Health Act. This government invests \$1.8 billion annually in supporting Queenslanders' mental health. We are also delivering \$74.5 million to support a mental health and wellbeing package in response to the additional mental health demands on the system created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The amendments are particularly focused on the interface between a person who has a mental illness with the criminal justice system. I note the feedback of the Queensland Law Society, which said—

QLS commends Queensland Health and the Government for the manner in which they engaged and consulted with stakeholders in the formation of the Bill. This thoughtful process has led to a workable piece of legislation which, as far as is possible, appears to be free from unintended consequences and addresses the substantive policy intent of the desired reforms.

This is a strong endorsement from Queensland's peak legal body about the consultative and measured approach the government has taken to policy development. It is certainly a far cry from the conduct of those opposite when they were in the Newman-Crisafulli government. Who can forget the war with the lawyers and judges that occurred under the stewardship of the member for Kawana when he was Attorney-General? It is a reminder that the Palaszczuk government backs up its rhetoric with action, rather than with wild claims and innuendo, like those opposite.

This bill is a testament to the approach taken by the Palaszczuk government with respect to policy formation and is an example of the proper functioning of the parliamentary committee system. As a whole, all of the amendments proposed have been the subject of extensive consultation and hard work by the committee, as well as important stakeholder input. The bill will lead to even stronger healthcare services in this great state. I commend this bill to the House.