




Speech By
Melissa McMahon

MEMBER FOR MACALISTER

Record of Proceedings, 14 October 2022

MENTAL HEALTH SELECT COMMITTEE

Motion, Report to Take Note

 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (3.12 pm): I rise to comment on our Mental Health Select Committee report, *Inquiry into the opportunities to improve mental health outcomes for Queenslanders*. I was proud to be given the opportunity to participate in this committee and the work that was done over a six-month period. This committee could have gone on for so much longer and spoken to so many more people because the work that is in front of us in the field of mental health services and alcohol and other drug services is not going to end any time soon. While this report has presented 57 recommendations, I think we can all acknowledge that it does not end there and that there will be more work than we can ever deal with.

It certainly was not an easy process for me to be a part of, but I acknowledge that sometimes the hardest things to do, the things that most need doing, are definitely not the easiest things to do. I thank the committee members and the secretariat for their support in the work that was involved in assisting the committee. In all honesty, five minutes is not going to do this report justice.

Before I get to the recommendations I would like to highlight an aspect of this committee process that I think may be helpful to all members of this House. In considering how this committee would do its work we had discussion about how the process should happen. We were going to be speaking to some of the most vulnerable Queenslanders and in doing so, as parliamentarians asking Queenslanders to recount their stories, we had to acknowledge the trauma that they would be bringing to the table. The responsible thing to do was to make sure that our inquiry was a trauma-informed inquiry. As part of that, committee members sat down with the Clerk to talk about how as parliamentarians we approach Queenslanders and how we support them when we ask them to come forward with their stories.

I am very pleased to report that with the help of Parliamentary Services as best we could we ensured that the processes were trauma informed. When we had vulnerable members of the public coming forward to tell their stories we had support available for them: we had qualified, trained people who could talk to them before and after they gave their evidence because the value that we got out of some of the stories should be weighed against the impact that retelling some of those stories does have on people.

There were 57 recommendations and each of them is a massive story in itself. I have no doubt we will be talking about some of them in future sitting weeks as they involve changes to legislation and policy. Recommendation 5 in terms of reducing stigma and the need to have influential people talk about mental health and normalise what mental health looks like in the workplace was certainly a significant factor in determining my course in talking about my mental health issues. I would encourage people in Queensland who have some exposure and experience or have had mental health concerns to talk about them more often and more loudly just so that people know that people can have high functioning jobs, perform their tasks and carry on normal lives. That will only happen when we have more people in those positions openly talking about it.

I was also very pleased to see recommendation 17, which talks about mental health services for Queensland's first responders post separation. Given what we are hearing about some of my former workplaces at the moment, in particular the Queensland Police Service, I do not think that we can fully comprehend what some of those people who have since separated from the QPS are going through or have gone through. I note the QPS does have wonderful support for those in the job, but I think what we need is something post service separation; much like the veterans have. I am very pleased to see that recommendation and I commend the report to the House.