




Speech By  
**Rob Molhoek**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT**

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Record of Proceedings, 12 October 2022

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

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (4.16 pm): I, too, rise to make a brief contribution in respect of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The member for Thuringowa raises an interesting point because there is a fine line between the need to strengthen powers in regard to public safety and also the unchecked or unmeasured power of control that is often given to organisations. One of the issues that we discussed at length throughout the committee process was the extent of those powers and who should wield them. During the hearings there were presentations around the timeliness of public disclosures or public statements regarding the conduct and performance of health professionals. That was not just in respect of doctors; it covered registered nurses and many other areas of allied health.

Having a robust system in place is important, but equally important is natural justice. In that context, we received a number of submissions from medical associations. I note that while they were not a submitter to the process, the Australian Medical Network have certainly spoken since and they have raised some concerns. I believe the amendments to be moved by the member for Mudgeeraba are reasonable because it is important that we protect not just the general public but also those who help and serve the general public. We need to ensure there are adequate protections in place for those people.

At the outset, I want to acknowledge the fact that all our health systems are under enormous pressure, as are our allied health workers, the many doctors and general practitioners who provide services through the PHN and also the thousands of employees of Queensland health and hospital services who work in collaboration with private health practices to provide medical care across the state.

It would be errant of me not to, at the outset, say thank you to all of those people who make an incredible contribution. I think it is important to understand and provide a bit of context when discussing the work and the role of the Office of the Health Ombudsman. They carry a huge burden of responsibility for the people of Queensland and for the most part—I am not a professional so it is difficult for me to judge—from my observations, they undertake most of their work fairly diligently and they follow the processes that are outlined by the government of the day and by this parliament.

My frustration, however, is that they report almost exclusively to the minister and to the Health and Environment Committee. There are blanket provisions under the standing orders and further resolutions that make it difficult sometimes for members of parliament to speak openly about some of the investigations that are ongoing. Some would argue that maybe that is a good thing, that it is a good safeguard; others would argue that that is not always necessarily in the public interest. I believe that as a parliament it is important that we continue to work to improve our committee structures. We are very careful around the edicts of the standing orders and the use of public and private meetings, because our role is to get the best outcome for all Queenslanders.

I turn to the issue of testimonial advertising. I have to say that I am pleased with the amendments that have been foreshadowed by the Minister for Health with regard to maintaining the prohibition on testimonial advertising. It is a very complex issue. Through the course of the public hearings and some of the public and private briefings, we heard testimony from a range of service providers. Sadly, it is a little bit like the debate that we perhaps had in this House a few years ago with respect to Uber. I think there was a desire to protect the taxi industry at one point and to exercise a sovereign right as a government to restrict renegade or disruptive media and services. Without casting judgement as to whether it was a good or a bad thing, I think the fact is that that disruption saw significant change in the transport industry and it was difficult for the government to exercise any control over it.

**Mr FURNER:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance.

**An opposition member** interjected.

**Mr FURNER:** My other point of order is: when I am on my feet making a point of order—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Lister): Minister, that is enough, thank you. I have taken your point of order. Please resume your seat. Member for Southport, can you offer any substantiation as to the relevance of what you are speaking about to the long title of the bill? I am asking that in making a ruling on the point of order.

**Mr MOLHOEK:** I was using that as an example of disruptive media. I was about to talk about the impact of social media in respect of testimonial advertising and some of the challenges that were brought to the committee.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** That is relevant. Carry on, please.

**Mr FURNER:** Mr Deputy Speaker, in taking a point of order I raised two matters in relation to the standing orders. I thank the member for taking his seat. The other matter was in relation to the member not taking his seat, which is under the standing orders.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I have dealt with the matter, Minister. Please resume your seat unless you have a further point of order.

**Mr Fumer** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Ferny Grove, when I am in the process of dealing with a point of order, which happened to be yours, you will not speak across me and you will not converse with members across the chamber. I warn you under the standing orders.

**Mr Fumer** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Ferny Grove, I will not take commentary on my ruling, especially when I have just warned you for doing so. You may leave the chamber for one hour under standing order 253.

*Whereupon the honourable member for Ferny Grove withdrew from the chamber at 4.24 pm.*

**Mr MOLHOEK:** I will move forward on the point I was getting to. Disruptive media is just that: it is disruptive. Maintaining a prohibition on testimonial advertising is difficult, given the power and reach of social media and given the fact that there are many organisations, agencies or practices that will absolutely use social media as a form of advertising, promoting or providing testimonials around their practices. Not all of that testimonial commentary comes from within Queensland or Australia; it actually comes from other parts of the world. It is particularly concerning when you start to look at issues around plastic surgery and body enhancement and the pressures that come as a result of some of that advertising and marketing in terms of how it influences body image and the self-confidence and self-esteem of young people.

I am pleased that we will be seeking to maintain a prohibition on that sort of testimonial advertising, but I flag that it will be challenging and difficult for medical practitioners and the industry to be held accountable for some of those forms of advertising and marketing.