




Speech By
Ali King

MEMBER FOR PUMICESTONE

Record of Proceedings, 18 April 2023

HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms KING** (Pumicestone—ALP) (6.53 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I must say that I quite enjoyed that little wander down memory lane from the member for Surfers Paradise. As I am sure all members do, I appreciate his commitment to people's dental health over many years.

This bill makes minor but important amendments to facilitate initiatives that support the provision of health services in Queensland and promote better health care for Queenslanders. Our government thinks that there is nothing more important than that. The bill amends multiple acts to update and modernise our Queensland health system and touches on overarching themes of ensuring health worker wellbeing, strengthening the management of information and balancing accountability with privacy protections. Very importantly for our Palaszczuk Labor government, the amendments in this bill primarily seek to deliver better protections for our healthcare workers to whom we all owe so much as we come out the other side of an unprecedented global pandemic. They could not be more important as we continue to work hard to deliver an innovative, contemporary and fit-for-purpose public health system.

Unlike the member for Southport, whose wonderings I always enjoy, we think that rules about rules are important at times and that, in fact, we need rules to ensure the safety of our health workers. All of that fits into the context of the incredible increases in demands on our public health system in Queensland and on our health workers as a result. In one recent quarter alone we saw an 11 per cent increase in ambulance demand. With those increasing demands, the pressures on the wellbeing of health workers are escalating and taking steps to ensure that they are cared for and protected are more important than ever. In this legislation we are taking steps to make hospital and health services and hospital and health boards directly and specifically responsible for ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of health workers and, indeed, all employees within Queensland's public health system.

As Ms Kellie Dwyer, professional officer of the QNMU noted, our health workforce face dangerous situations day in, day out and they need to know that we are taking every possible step to ensure that they are protected. Mr Jamie Shepherd said that it is about looking forward to going to work, being able to do your job safely and competently, and going home at the end of the day feeling that you have done a good job. You should not be wondering, 'Will I get hit today?'

I note the feedback from many submitters who expressed appreciation for the consultative process undertaken by the department, particularly the legislative and policy unit. The AMAQ in particular acknowledged the legislative and policy unit for its collaborative approach. The AMAQ stated that they were extremely pleased to see included key amendments regarding enhanced hospital and health service responsibility for health worker wellbeing and that they appreciated the sensible changes made to the bill as originally proposed to allow enhanced natural justice for health workers facing administrative action.

In relation to the changes regarding security officers, the bill amends the Hospital and Health Boards Act to make it clear that security officers cannot direct a person to leave hospital and health service land if the person requires immediate care. In their response to questions, the department was very clear that security officers will not have the responsibility for making clinical decisions relating to the health status of a person, which was comforting particularly for the unions involved. The QNMU submitted that the changes relating to security officers are very important and that nursing staff value and appreciate enormously well trained security staff. In environments where critical care is required or the case mix is varied or complex, understanding the precise boundaries is crucial and these amendments will make a real difference.

As we have heard, the bill modernises and increases the data provided to the Queensland Cancer Register. Of course, that is essential for making sure that cancer data can be utilised to give the best possible treatments, research, care and ultimately outcomes for Queenslanders. The changes will ensure that more data is provided to the register and the data is more complete. More valuable information will allow the risk of cancer to be managed into the future.

Of course, managing cancer risk and ensuring that Queenslanders facing cancer are supported as well as possible are key values for our government as we saw with the commitment to build the \$750 million Queensland cancer centre at Herston. I know for the people in my electorate that is a very welcome initiative. As the member for Thuringowa noted in his contribution, Queensland has the highest rates of skin cancer in the world and it is essential that we gather data that can help with prevention, treatment and recovery. That was the strong advocacy of the Cancer Council Queensland and we all hope that we see that occur.

We appreciate the minister's commitment to have Queensland Health continue to engage with that issue and look closely at whether it is possible to increase the notification of data around basal cell carcinomas and squamous cell carcinomas. They are the cancers that so many of us will experience in our lifetime. Gathering and managing that data appropriately is important.

The changes to the Mental Health Review Tribunal proceedings recording are really sensitive and important for the small number of Queenslanders who go through that process. The new framework that is established by this bill allows more flexibility for the recording of evidence and the reporting of outcomes of tribunal decisions and enhances safeguards—

Debate, on motion of Ms King, adjourned.