




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (11.33 am): I am pleased to support the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The Palaszczuk government is strongly focused on delivering quality healthcare reforms that improve health outcomes for future generations of Queenslanders. There have been many bills since we were elected in 2015 that reflect that. Doctors, nurses, midwives, allied health professionals, and operational and administrative staff in Queensland's hospital and health services all do an amazing job looking after the health and wellbeing of their fellow Queenslanders. They often work in very complex, high-pressure environments that pose safety risks to their physical and mental health.

Queensland Health is the biggest employer in Ipswich. We have to ensure that our hospitals and our health boards support our public health workforce so they can effectively provide a good level of care to Queenslanders. That is why this bill will amend the Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011 to enshrine in legislation that the physical and psychological health, safety and wellbeing of our public health workforce is appropriately prioritised. Hospital boards and hospital and health services will do this by promoting a supportive workplace culture and proactively putting into place measures that support the health, safety and wellbeing of their staff.

We all value the work that our public health workers do every day, but their work environments can sometimes be incredibly challenging—take, for example, nursing. Australian nurses are highly skilled practitioners who are university qualified and have training to carry out complex clinical procedures on patients utilising advanced medical technology. In a 2022 report by McKinsey & Company on Australia's nursing retention dilemma, a survey of nursing staff found that working conditions contribute substantially to nurses' decisions to stay or leave. The biggest factor influencing nurses' decisions to stay in their current role was a positive work environment, like having caring teammates, having a safe space, feeling valued by management and having a real sense of purpose.

Given that the demand for nursing professionals is predicted to grow, it is crucially important that their health, safety and wellbeing are well supported by Queensland's public hospital and health services and boards. It is crucial that all public health workers—doctors, allied health professionals, nurses and midwives, and admin and support staff—are well supported in their workplace so they can continue to keep looking after the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders.

The other health worker staff worth mentioning are our health security officers in hospitals who sometimes have the very challenging job of dealing with the public and protecting the safety of patients and health staff. We know that hospitals, especially emergency departments, can be extremely stressful places, and unfortunately there are thousands of instances each year of patients abusing and assaulting hospital staff who are helping them. There is no excuse for patients to treat hospital staff like this, but there are instances where some of those patients do need emergency treatment to save their life or prevent serious impairment.

This bill will clarify when healthcare security officers can direct persons to leave public healthcare premises if they are causing a public nuisance or being disorderly or creating a disturbance. It will reinforce that health security officers cannot provide a direction for a person to leave the hospital

grounds if the person requires emergency medical treatment. This amendment reflects current practice where security officers communicate with clinical staff before providing a direction to leave. I know this works because I often hear anecdotes in my role as a local MP and also as the mother of a doctor who has been in those situations.

During the pandemic, our government put the lives of Queenslanders first by putting in place public health measures and following the advice of experts to keep our population safe from COVID-19. We understand that a healthy population is more productive and able to fulfil their potential in life. In this bill, we are continuing our government's strong public health agenda by adding an amendment to this bill to maximise resources to our school vision-screening program. Each year the Queensland Health Primary School Nurse Health Readiness Program screens Queensland prep students for lazy eye, or amblyopia, which is the leading cause of preventable vision loss in children under eight years. Early detection can markedly improve children's engagement at school and long-term education outcomes. As there is currently no authorisation for school staff to share information with Queensland Health's vision-screening service, a significant amount of time and resources is spent on administrative work and this can sometimes limit the program's ability to screen enough students to achieve universal coverage. This bill will amend the Public Health Act to authorise the disclosure of student information from schools to Queensland Health's vision-screening service to reduce that administrative burden and allow more kids to be screened for this condition.

There are a significant number of amendments to this bill and I will touch briefly on a few of those. This bill will amend the Medicines and Poisons Act to allow disclosure of information about individuals working with medicines or poisons and enable Queensland Health to disclose confidential medicines and poisons information for regulation, safety and compliance purposes.

The bill also amends the Mental Health Act to remove the requirement for an adult with capacity to waive the right to be represented at a Mental Health Tribunal hearing in writing. Requiring a waiver in writing is something that can create a barrier for individuals trying to access their rights in a timely way.

This also will amend our Public Health Act to modernise the Queensland Cancer Register to provide a more accurate picture of cancer in Queensland. This will enable us to properly plan, monitor and evaluate cancer treatments and cancer care outcomes in the state and provide accurate data for research purposes. The bill will also amend the Radiation Safety Act to create a new offence for failure to ensure a person does not receive greater than a specified dose of ionising radiation. These amendments will facilitate public health services and initiatives to improve Queenslanders' health outcomes.

I want to note that the health of all Queenslanders has clearly been a priority for the Palaszczuk Labor government right from the get-go. Since 2015, we have invested billions of dollars into Queensland's health system to ensure everyone is able to access quality treatment when needed. Our health budget last year was the largest in Queensland's history, allocating \$23.6 billion to deliver new hospitals, expand existing hospitals, recruit more doctors, nurses and frontline workers, and fund better health services for rural and regional centres. In Ipswich, we are due to complete the satellite hospital in South Ripley in the last quarter of this year. Adjacent to the satellite hospital, we are building a new subacute care facility which delivers an additional 90 subacute beds to boost our local capacity and provide physical therapy rehabilitation, geriatric, palliative and interim care services. That subacute facility is set to be delivered by the end of the next year.

The Ipswich Hospital has been undergoing stage 1 expansion work since 2017. Last year \$710 million was announced to deliver stage 2 of the hospital expansion which will deliver an additional 200 beds by 2027. The much anticipated Mental Health Unit in Ipswich is set to be finished before too much longer. It is fantastic to see the progress of that much awaited building. Ipswich has received record health funding over the last eight years, and we are seeing the result of that in our community. I commend this bill to the House.