




Speech By
Joan Pease

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

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HEALTH PRACTITIONER REGULATION NATIONAL LAW (SURGEONS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (3.04 pm): I rise to speak to the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (Surgeons) Amendment Bill 2023. This bill responds to findings and recommendations into the regulation of cosmetic surgery in Australia and the strong need to strengthen title protections under the national law. With Queensland as the host of the national law, it is our responsibility to make sure our laws are meeting national standards. That is why the passing of this bill is so important. The bill amends the national law to protect the title 'surgeon' within the medical profession. It does so by restricting which doctors can use the title 'surgeon'. The objectives of the bill are to protect the title 'surgeon' within the medical profession to safeguard the public and strengthen the regulation of cosmetic surgery in Australia and to clarify the decision-making authority of tribunals after hearing a matter about a registered health practitioner.

Over the past year there has been a litany of appalling stories about poor practices in the cosmetic surgery industry with permanent damage done to untold numbers of Queenslanders, and this morning we have heard from both sides of the House some examples of these appalling behaviours. Recent reviews across Australia showed the strong need to protect the title of 'surgeon' under the national law. During consultation, consumer surveys revealed that 237 respondents reported harm because of dodgy cosmetic procedures. We have heard those heartbreaking stories from real-life people—from practitioners inadequately prepared for emergencies to poor hygiene and infection control. The damage on people's lives can be irreversible. These atrocious harms are the reason why we need to strengthen the definition of 'surgeon'.

Currently, cosmetic surgery is not an approved speciality. This means that any medical practitioner may market themselves as a cosmetic or aesthetic surgeon, even if they do not have the appropriate qualifications. Sadly, there is a growing trend to undergo cosmetic or aesthetic procedures and that means that potentially the community is unknowingly putting themselves at risk. It is understandable that the title of 'surgeon' would offer comfort to those who have chosen to undertake cosmetic or aesthetic procedures. This bill will ensure this will be an offence for medical practitioners who are not members of a defined surgical class or for those who recklessly hold themselves out as being members of the surgical class by using the title 'surgeon' or the use of another title, name, initial, symbol, word or description that could reasonably indicate that the practitioner is in the surgical class, and that will also apply to employees and other persons.

Cosmetic procedures that are not performed appropriately by qualified practitioners are putting lives at risk and in some cases can cause permanent harm. Ahpra and the Medical Board of Australia have already cracked down on advertising and social media used to promote cosmetic surgery. The amendments in this bill will give Ahpra powers to take action if the title 'surgeon' is misused or consumers are misled about the qualifications of their chosen practitioner. It is about making sure

Queenslanders are protected from predatory practitioners claiming to have qualifications beyond their scope. The vast majority of doctors do the right thing. They are hard working, principled and act with the very best interests of patients in mind.

As members of parliament, each of us in this room has a responsibility to make sure Queenslanders are safe and to consider matters that impact on our community and to work to improve the lives of all Queenslanders. Just like doctors and surgeons, the public expects parliamentarians to conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the important work that we do. That is why I have been absolutely appalled by the disgraceful behaviour of those opposite this week. The nastiness, personal attacks and divisions have reached a disturbing new level. This is my workplace. I do not and nor should I have to work in an environment where this behaviour is tolerated. My constituents expect me to ensure that they are safe and that I represent Lytton in a fair and respectful manner and that I conduct myself in a manner that would be acceptable at the Waterloo Bay Leisure Centre in Wynnum or the Wynnum or Manly bowls clubs. Unfortunately, that cannot be said of those opposite. Like my colleagues who have stood before me, I support the Premier and our government because we will continue to deliver and offer great representation in Queensland. These reforms are about protecting Queenslanders—

Mr POWELL: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order: relevance to the long title of the bill.

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): Order! I will take advice in silence. Member for Lytton, I ask you to come back to the long title or to the substance of the report.

Ms PEASE: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. I appreciate your guidance. I am surprised that it took them so long to get there because they do not like to hear the truth.

Mr Minnikin interjected.

Ms PEASE: I reiterate: I am not taking interjections but I am reinforcing my comments about their poor behaviour. That is an example of poor behaviour.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms PEASE: Again, I reinforce my comments. That is a disgraceful display. Do I have to stand up and behave like a mother?

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members! Member for Lytton, I ask you to come back to the bill.

Ms PEASE: Thank you and I will, if the people opposite stop trying to interject and yell over the top of me. These reforms are about protecting from unnecessary harms those Queenslanders who choose aesthetic procedures. Again I call on those opposite to consider their actions and behaviour.

I would like to talk about the changes to 'surgical class' to include additional classes of medical practitioners, including rural generalists who are specialist GPs trained to provide context-appropriate skilled services in rural and remote areas. Their scope of practice is defined across primary, secondary and emergency care, including providing much needed surgical, obstetrics, gynaecological and other non-procedural advanced skills to Australia's rural and remote communities.

I was previously on the health committee. I acknowledge the work of the health committee. It was an honour to work with that committee on the many wonderful amendments and changes that have been introduced into Queensland. I thank the chair and the ministers who have looked after the health portfolio. I acknowledge the great work of the secretariat on this particular piece of legislation. I also thank the people who made submissions. I commend the bill to the House.