




Speech By  
**Lance McCallum**

**MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA**

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Record of Proceedings, 19 April 2023

### **HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr McCALLUM** (Bundamba—ALP) (2.45 pm): I think the contribution from the member for South Brisbane has gone past the normal levels of Greens spin that we see and into a new Greens dystopia. It was unbelievably hypocritical to hear a contribution reflecting on difficulties and stresses for our healthcare workers from a member of a political party that is holding up \$10 billion worth of housing investment. All of the healthcare workers who work at the PA who might want to live in the electorate of South Brisbane or Maiwar can contact their local members and say, 'Stop protesting the building of more houses in the electorates of South Brisbane and Maiwar.' It is extreme hypocrisy.

I am very happy to rise and contribute to the debate to support a bill which supports and helps strengthen protections for our frontline healthcare workers. I want to acknowledge all of our hardworking healthcare staff, including the wonderful healthcare workers at West Moreton Health. I note that West Moreton Health took the time to make a submission on this bill, and I thank them for that. I thank them for their tireless work in looking after our community, for helping people during their times of most need, especially through the pandemic.

Of course, all of our healthcare workers went above and beyond to help protect Queenslanders through the pandemic. I give a special mention and a special shout-out to: the staff at the Goodna public health clinic, who were working unbelievably long hours doing contact tracing in the midst of the pandemic; our healthcare workers who were out there during the pandemic at COVID clinics; and the healthcare workers who were maintaining healthcare service provision throughout an unheralded public health emergency and all of the difficulties that came with that and all of the stresses. That is why this bill, a bill which strengthens the protection of the physical and psychological wellbeing of our public health workforce, is so very welcome. Our public health workers can rely on the Palaszczuk government to deliver these increased protections.

The measures in this bill will help our hospital and health services and their boards proactively consider the health, safety and wellbeing of our public sector health staff. It will strengthen the provisions for the wellbeing of workers. Importantly, this includes, obviously, our frontline clinical workers but also our hardworking health administrative and operational staff who are part of the broader health family and who are every bit as dedicated and critical and who form part of the overall health family that go above and beyond in protecting Queenslanders.

No-one would argue that our health workers are often in extremely high pressure and challenging environments and situations in their workplace—none more so than throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. It is completely understandable that the complex nature of their work and the high pressure of these challenging situations and environments can pose unique risks to their wellbeing, whether that be a physical threat from a virus like COVID-19 or whether it be psychological impacts on their overall health and wellbeing. In this bill, 'wellbeing' includes physical and psychological health, safety and wellbeing as well as emotional wellbeing and cultural safety. It is great to see cultural safety being included in this legislation. West Moreton Health, for example, has a wonderful First Nations unit. They

engage brilliantly with the local First Nations community—they have a yarnning circle. It is wonderful to see elements of culture being brought into the health system to create a better environment for staff and patients alike.

It is hard to imagine a more egregious breach of the health and safety—particularly the psychological health and safety—of our healthcare workers than calling regional healthcare workers ‘duds’ or calling our chief health officer during the COVID pandemic ‘a punch-drunk bureaucrat’. If that happened in a workplace under the provisions of this bill it would absolutely breach the standards contained in this legislation. That is what the LNP have said about our healthcare workers. It is quite extraordinary. Calling 64 times for us to open the borders during the height of the pandemic—this would have overwhelmed our stressed healthcare system and put more pressure on our health workers—represents a threat to the physical and psychological wellbeing of our public health workforce.

The Palaszczuk Labor government will keep on delivering more resources in terms of record staff levels. We have delivered more than 17,000 additional frontline health workers since 2015. That is over 17,000 frontline health workers who are going to benefit from the new protections that are contained in this bill. That is a 38 per cent increase in nurses; a 29 per cent increase in doctors; a 29 per cent increase in ambulance officers; and an almost 25 per cent increase in allied health professionals. In fact, around nine out of 10 employees work in frontline and frontline support roles. This year in Ipswich we have already welcomed 35 new doctors and 89 new nurses as part of another 1,036 frontline health workers right across Queensland.

**Mr Harper:** That lot would prune them.

**Mr McCALLUM:** I take the interjection from the member for Thuringowa. Quite the opposite to pruning, we are growing. We are building new, state-of-the-art facilities for our frontline healthcare workers. These brand new workplaces will help them to deliver world-class health care to our communities—like the Ipswich Hospital expansion with 200 beds and a 50-bed mental health unit, like the satellite hospital in Ripley which is well under construction. I had the opportunity to inspect the progress, and it is on track. Right next door there will be a 90-bed subacute facility. All of these brand new, state-of-the-art facilities will be filled with frontline healthcare workers who are going to benefit from the protections in this bill.

It is disappointing to consistently hear the LNP talking down our healthcare workers. They cannot contribute to this debate and say that everything in Queensland when it comes to the health sector is bad but ‘I don’t want to criticise the workers’. That is what those opposite are doing.