




Speech By
Linus Power

MEMBER FOR LOGAN

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HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (2.07 pm): Members in this place do not recognise often enough the workers who make our health system deliver for Queensland. Instead the LNP in particular see them simply as a cost—a line item on a budget to be ‘pruned’. We saw this extraordinary attitude of the LNP when the shadow minister for health attacked rural and regional health workers and called them duds.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Lister): Order, members! The member for Logan is the only member with the call.

Mr POWER: Thank you for your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker. That simply is not good enough. That is not my attitude and that is not the attitude of this government. The Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill reflects this government’s attitude and the health minister’s attitude that we must value our health workers. We must support hospital workers and our hospitals by getting health services to take active steps to back health workers by having a special focus on their health, safety and wellbeing.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The members for Thuringowa and Mudgeeraba will cease their quarrelling across the chamber.

Mr POWER: We should never forget the work stresses that hospital workers went through in the last few years of COVID-19.

Mrs Frecklington: What about the last eight years?

Mr POWER: It is great that the member for Nanango is here, because they called 64 times for the borders to open prematurely and they wanted to open them—

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Nanango, please cease your interjections.

Mr POWER: They called 64 times for the borders to be prematurely opened before vaccination, and we know from history that would have exponentially added to the stresses of health workers. I know they are making a lot of noise, but I want to repeat that by dangerously opening the borders—they called for it 64 times—before vaccination they would have put extra stress on our health workers and hurt our economy. During COVID-19 I regularly visited testing clinics throughout Logan, especially at the Logan Hospital.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Ms Boyd interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Pine Rivers and the member for Nanango will cease their quarrelling across the chamber. The next time I will issue a formal warning.

Mr POWER: I can see the member for Nanango speaking out, because 64 times she called prematurely to open the borders before vaccination. That would have put stress on hospital workers, but when I spoke to security they talked in a calm and professional way about how they dealt with the stress that so many patients felt and the unknown features of the pandemic. I simply want to say thank you to hospital workers from cleaners to security, nurses, doctors and administration. Your work saved thousands of lives and thousands of jobs. The reason we have created so many jobs since COVID is because we started from the position of so many families having a breadwinner because of good policy and leadership—certainly that is true—but also because of the professionalism and bravery of health workers who lead the way in getting vaccinated and continue to work to keep Queenslanders healthy.

As MPs, we have all sat down with people who have talked to us about their hospital experience. We know that, for many of them, admission to hospital is one of the most stressful things they will go through. Recently a father contacted me about a really serious industrial accident that hurt his son. He was under immense stress as he worried about his son and the treatment he was getting. In this case he ended up being immensely grateful for the treatment his son received during a very busy period, but that does not make the concern and stress he felt in that moment any less real. From the moment he got the call that his son had been injured to arriving at emergency, surgery, and even now in recovery, the family stress he would have felt would have also been transferred and felt by workers.

As noted by Queensland Health, that is why we are introducing wellbeing activities that can include wellbeing check-ins, wellbeing monitoring programs, peer support programs, nutritional food options, flexible work arrangements, and intervention for health risks like fatigue, vicarious trauma and occupational violence. These are designed to create healthy workplaces, promote staff consultation measures and provide details about how staff wellbeing is taken into account. This is good for the workers, but I think it is also good for patients who know they are going to get a worker in a better mental and physical state. It will also mean better outcomes for our state, and that is why I support the bill.

Everyone in Logan knows how fast Logan is growing, with new families moving in every day. That is why there is pressure on health workers, but it is also because of facilities. We know that we support patients and workers through investments, and in Logan we are delivering through the new mental health lounge, the new car park, the new ward 2B and major extensions. These major extensions were all unsupported by the Morrison LNP government, which was very disappointing.

I want to recognise the contributions of the QNMU and Australian Workers' Union. They know the details of the stresses that health workers face, and their members know that any day they can face difficulty or even danger from patients. They know that in some cases their co-workers and managers could do much better to ensure the wellness of workers. Earlier this year we invited thousands of prospective health workers to attend the first annual Logan Hospital Careers Fair. This was a major local employer, the Logan Hospital, looking after the wellness of local employees and keeping locals healthy; that is, locals looking after locals and local employment.

There is a real contrast in this House: the government on this side invests in Logan, in growing communities and the health services that new families and Logan seniors need; or the pruners over there who see the Logan Hospital as just a cost and workers as something in need of pruning. Our growing communities cannot afford to risk the LNP. How do we know that is not rubbish? Because we know that is what they did last time they were in government. They cut services, they sacked nurses and they did not invest in the Logan Hospital. Our growing communities cannot afford that, so we cannot risk an LNP government. We need to keep investing. I know that the entire Logan team and myself will continue to pressure to keep up investment. I commend this bill because it is about health workers and the wellness they need to bring wellness to others.