




Speech By  
**Ann Leahy**

**MEMBER FOR WARREGO**

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## **HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (NO. 2)**

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (6.20 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2). In general, the bill amends the Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011 to clarify nurse-to-patient and midwife-to-patient ratios and that a newborn baby should be counted as a patient when they are staying in a room on a maternity ward with their mother. However, it does nothing to restore the 37 maternity services that have been cut by Labor governments across rural and regional Queensland. It is these cuts to maternity services that have led to babies being born on the side of the Warrego Highway. There is no midwife-to-patient ratio when your child is born on the side of the highway.

Regional women have contacted my office distressed about the lack of local birthing options in rural and regional Queensland and the shortage of midwives. They are worried they will have to drive themselves an hour down the highway on their own from Chinchilla to Dalby in labour without the services of a midwife. Labor governments close rural maternity services and we never see these returned under Labor governments. Contrast this with LNP governments, which open regional maternity services. The LNP when in government opened birthing services in Chinchilla, Cooktown and Beaudesert.

The bill makes changes to the Quality Assurance Committee disclosure of information and clarifies what action the chief executive of Queensland Health may take following part 6 or part 9 reviews. The bill changes the Termination of Pregnancy Act 2018 and the Criminal Code to allow additional health practitioners to perform an early medical termination of pregnancy through the use of a registered termination drug in response to recent changes in prescribing restrictions made by the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

Given this Labor government will most likely guillotine this debate and not allow opposition members to have their votes on the clauses recorded, I want to reiterate the position outlined by the shadow minister for health—that is, the LNP opposition will vote against all the provisions of the bill which make amendments to the Termination of Pregnancy Act 2018 and the Criminal Code during consideration in detail. I doubt very much that this Labor government will allow opposition members to have their votes and their opposition to those particular provisions recorded.

When I listen to the Labor government on this issue, I hear a government that is seriously out of touch with patient safety in the regions. It is a Labor government which is particularly out of touch with women's patient safety in the regions. There seems to be some assumption from those members opposite that everyone has access to a medical practitioner when they need one. That is not the case in South-West Queensland. There are multipurpose health facilities in my electorate that have spent up to 100 days without a doctor or a locum doctor present. All of the multipurpose health facilities have had extended periods of time without the presence of a doctor or a locum, and some of these do not have nurse practitioners. The lack of doctors and locum doctors places incredible pressure on the existing

nursing staff and forces them to work outside their scope of practice. These legislation changes will place more pressure on those already stretched nursing staff, which will force them to further work outside their scope of practice.

What is clear is that this Labor government has no workforce plan for regional communities, and this is evidenced daily in my electorate by the continued gaps in doctor coverage. The availability—or lack thereof—of health services in regional and remote Queensland to provide the necessary care for women who may suffer complications following their decision to terminate a pregnancy is a clear area of concern. Should complications arise for women in a community that has no doctor presence—which is a common situation right now in my electorate—they will have to rely on the emergency retrieval services of either the RFDS or LifeFlight. They will not be able to drive two hours to the nearest doctor. Due to the ambulance ramping in this state, these aerial retrieval services are already stretched to the limit because they run out of flight hours when they get ramped at airports due to a lack of ambulances to transfer their patients to major hospitals.

The bill also replaces references to ‘woman’ with ‘person’ in termination-of-pregnancy provisions. The LNP opposition do not support these changes and we will vote against this. Our view is shared across the political and cultural divide with stakeholders, including the Queensland Nurses and Midwives’ Union, the Australian College of Midwives, the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists—with each raising some form of reservation with these changes. The views shared by the Queensland Nurses and Midwives’ Union and the College of Midwives Queensland Branch are particularly strong.

Queenslanders deserve so much better than what this Labor government is offering. Rural and regional women deserve so much better from this Labor government because they are denying them services. Queenslanders should show Labor the door in '24.