




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD

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HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (NO. 2)

 **Ms McMILLAN** (Mansfield—ALP) (6.26 pm): I rise to speak on the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2023. This week is Queensland Women's Week. There is no better time than the present to expand women's rights in health care here in Queensland. In 2018 our government removed termination of pregnancy from the Criminal Code, giving Queensland women the right to choose for the first time in Queensland's history. We will always protect this right, but Queensland women have told us that they are facing inequalities accessing sexual and reproductive health care. That is not acceptable. In my electorate of Mansfield, over 50 per cent of the community are female. These women deserve safe and accessible sexual and reproductive health care that does not discriminate on the basis of their backgrounds nor their socio-economic status. We have listened and now we are delivering. This bill is a step in the right direction.

Endorsed midwives, nurse practitioners and certain registered nurses and midwives with the appropriate qualifications and training will be able to facilitate safe and accessible termination-of-pregnancy medication. Ensuring reasonable and safe access to these services is absolutely crucial for Queensland women and the recognition of reproductive rights. 'Safe and accessible' are the key words here.

Further, in Queensland mums and bubs will be protected by a ratio of one midwife to every six patients, which includes babies. A newborn baby will be counted as a separate patient when they are staying in the same hospital room as their birth parent. A trial of minimum midwife-to-patient ratios in postnatal maternity wards was completed in June 2023. This is about delivering the safest, highest quality care possible. This is something our midwives have been calling for for years, and I want to acknowledge the tireless advocacy of our incredible frontline health staff, particularly those nurses who work at the QEII and PA Hospital that serve my electorate. I acknowledge also the wonderful leadership of the Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union and all members of that union, including the member for Greenslopes.

This bill is also building on our existing nurse-to-patient ratios, which have been proven to be very effective in delivering better health outcomes for patients. We know that better teacher-to-student ratios in schools deliver better educational outcomes for students, and we also know that closer nurse-to-patient ratios deliver better health outcomes for all patients. Counting babies as a separate patient to their parent will ensure our extraordinary midwives can provide safer, more comprehensive and more compassionate care to families. This legislation is nation-leading.

Meanwhile, the LNP have a history of cutting funding to health services. They have never missed a chance to compromise public health care in Queensland. The LNP refused to support our nurse-to-patient ratios in 2016. In fact, the current opposition spokesperson for health, Ros Bates, spoke against nurse-to-patient ratios in this place on International Nurses Day. This is not the only time the LNP have targeted Queensland mums. They also cut \$291,000 from the Triple P—Positive Parenting Program, a well-researched program developed by our very own University of Queensland's School of Psychology's Professor Matt Sanders and his team, backed by more than 30 years of research. This

program has helped more than a million Australian families and it is a program that I have offered to thousands of families in my school communities. Women under the Miles government are provided safe avenues to make decisions about their bodies, and women under the Miles government will always be our priority.

The opposition, as we have heard tonight, will try to tell Queenslanders that they back women, but while the LNP cut funding to Family Planning Queensland for women's reproductive health services, countless women's shelters and Women's Health Queensland, our government is listening to women and is acting. We just released the brand new Women and Girls' Health Strategy, backed by a \$1 billion investment, and I congratulate our Minister for Health, the Hon. Shannon Fentiman MP, member for Waterford. Almost 12,000 women and girls were surveyed so we could make sure we delivered on issues that matter most to them.

Our government always relies on research and evidence-based decision-making to ensure we are benefiting Queenslanders and Queensland families. They told us access to sexual and reproductive health care closer to home was one of their biggest concerns and that it is what this Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2023 does. Equitable access to women's sexual and reproductive health is crucial for ensuring gender equality as well as the empowerment of women worldwide, and the Miles government are trailblazers in this. It is so important to recognise that access to these services is a matter not only of health but also of social justice. In Queensland Women's Week especially, we must advocate for policies and programs that promote equitable access to sexual and reproductive health services for all women, regardless of their socio-economic status, their geographic location or any other factors, and this is exactly what our government is doing with the introduction of this bill—better health care closer to home.

I am also proud to be a woman representing one of our Queensland communities, and it is legislation like this which makes me honoured to be part of the Miles government. During this Queensland Women's Week, I would applaud anyone from the opposition to stand up in support of this bill and apologise to Queensland women and girls for never making their health and safety their priority. I commend this bill to the House.