




Speech By
Joseph Kelly

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Record of Proceedings, 21 August 2024

MOTION

Mental Health Services

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (4.45 pm): I start by acknowledging all those people with lived experience of mental health and alcohol and other drug issues. I also acknowledge all the staff, volunteers and other people who work very hard to support people who experience those issues and the families of people with those issues.

I note the motion moved by the Greens. Obviously, I support the government's amendment to the motion. There is no disagreement around the objectives the Greens are putting forward, but there is a great deal of difference around the manner in which we deliver them due to a lack of understanding on their part around the realities of trying to run an entire mental health system.

It was a great privilege to be the chair of the Mental Health Select Committee. We should ask ourselves why the government chose to do that. We did it because Queenslanders told us it was important. We listened to them and then we did what matters.

Last year I had the great honour of attending the opening of Catherine's House at the Mater Hospital. When we did the inquiry, there were only four mum and bub mental health beds in Queensland, and they were on the Gold Coast. Thanks to the Mater Hospital, we have 12. I would like to thank the generous donors and philanthropists like Kelly Murphy and the Murphy family who supported the establishment of those beds. One of the major funding components of that came from the mental health levy that this government put in place. We are not stopping at 12 beds around the state. There are another 30 on the way. We will have 42, which was about the number we recommended.

I was sad to miss the opening of the Stepping Stone Clubhouse on the north side in the electorate of Aspley. Stepping Stone is a fantastic organisation. I did not go because I am afraid of the north side; I just did not go because I had another event on. They are a great organisation. They were mentioned 20 times in the bilateral partnership agreement between the state and federal governments. That new service and facility has been funded by the mental health levy.

During the inquiry we noted the real and rapid increase in people with eating disorders. Just a few weeks ago on your green, Mr Speaker, we had Eating Disorders Queensland with us. I particularly liked talking to the lived experience practitioners. That organisation received a massive funding increase to offer evidence-based services throughout the state, all funded by the mental health levy.

A quick scan of the statement of reservation to report No. 1 of the Mental Health Select Committee by the member for South Brisbane shows that the Greens did not support the levy. I have lost count of how many times at polling booths over the years I have heard Greens volunteers saying things like, 'Tax billionaires and put the money into mental health.' These are good people who give up their time. I wonder what they thought when the first opportunity to do this came along and their elected representative squibbed it and did not support that.

It is pretty typical of the Greens to protest about something but when there is actually a chance to deliver they walk away. Perhaps they are all about protest and they really do not want the outcomes. It is also pretty typical for them to hone in on specific issues that they think can amplify for a bit of noise in the community and not try to understand the complexity of the issue.

Sadly, governments do have to make tough choices about how to deliver health care. If one asked any health economist, they would say that there are plenty of tools and methods to help with those tough decisions but it is common for governments and health funds to set limits on treatments. If one were to ask a clinician, they would say it is problematic. From a clinical perspective, we want to deliver whatever health care is needed based on the needs of the patient. We do not live in the perfect clinical world that I would like us to live in. From an economic perspective, as soon as you put a number on something you can get one of two things happening: you can get too many services or you can get too few services. It is a difficult and challenging thing to get right, but I trust Mark Butler and federal Labor to make this decision.

As I said, the Greens love to focus on some specific issue and then try to blow it up and make out that they are the only ones with moral authority on the issue. I just want to run through a list of some of the things implemented by this government that are having a positive impact on people's mental health and helping to prevent them from developing mental illness. If you help people to get a job you help their mental health, so Skilling Queenslanders for Work is a great initiative. Focusing on education, free kindy, free TAFE and keeping people in school is important. If you ease their anxieties over cost of living by putting \$1,000 on their energy bills, introducing 50-cent fares and giving them 20 per cent off their car rego, that makes a difference. If you get people fit and active through FairPlay vouchers and investing in sporting infrastructure, instead of protesting against it, that helps people with their mental health. If you support people in their workplaces, as we have done with the small business initiatives, that helps people.

Sadly, my time will not allow me to reflect on the LNP's appalling track record. Labor has introduced a levy. Labor is rolling out improved services. Only Labor is listening to Queenslanders and doing what matters for Queensland.