




Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Record of Proceedings, 7 March 2024

HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (NO. 2)

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (4.12 pm): I will limit my contribution to the issues associated with clinical reviews, part 6, and health service investigations, part 9, under the Hospital and Health Boards Act. In addition to other reviews that have been carried out, I want to focus on an unresolved issue regarding serious allegations of patient deaths and harm in medical wards 2 and 3 within the Bundaberg Hospital. I have raised these before in this House. I am saying here today that they are not resolved, and debate on this bill gives us an opportunity to reflect on the changes that have been made.

Serious concerns were raised by whistleblowers to Beryl Crosby, patient advocate, about the inappropriate storage and administration of S8 drugs for dementia patients in the Bundaberg Hospital, including allegations that patients had been harmed as a result. In relation to this bill, the inquiry found that changes to nurse-to-patient ratios was a contributing factor. It is important that we reflect on this bill, which will ultimately pass today.

I want to touch on some of the issues in the time I have left. The following points outlined deficiencies and concerns within the investigation and subsequent outcomes of the investigation and review. The review did not examine the complaints during the period when they were made. The investigation did not review every patient on the ward. Seventy-three per cent of ward 2 staff and 61 per cent of ward 3 staff did not feel confident about speaking up—two-thirds of the nursing team. Eight out of 10 people interviewed felt confident. This showed that a disproportionate number of people were interviewed deliberately to distort the findings against the stats. All nurses and AINs should have been interviewed automatically and not voluntarily, and it is known that some staff made phone calls to the hotline but were never called back. The review goes on to say that issues continue.

In conclusion, the investigation and review create more questions than answers. I put on record that we need to do an independent investigation. There is a lack of transparency around who conducted these reports as this information has been redacted. Right-to-information requests have been blocked continually over the nearly four years with regard to this issue. I refer to the application requesting access to records held by the Wide Bay HHS for the original report into medication management. It does need to be made available. It is important that we continue towards a full external and independent investigation into medical wards 2 and 3 at the Bundaberg Hospital for a period of two years with all patient records and charts to be reviewed.

I want to put on record for my constituents, to be fair and transparent, that I will also be voting against the termination-of-pregnancy legislation. With that, I conclude.