




Speech By  
**Ariana Doolan**

**MEMBER FOR PUMICESTONE**

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Record of Proceedings, 3 April 2025

## **HEALTH PRACTITIONER REGULATION NATIONAL LAW AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Miss DOOLAN** (Pumicestone—LNP) (3.09 pm): Today I rise to speak in support of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. This bill is crucial in ensuring public safety and enhancing transparency within our healthcare system. As the host jurisdiction of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, Queensland holds the responsibility to enact and amend the national law on behalf of all states and territories. The national law governs the registration and accreditation of 16 health professions, including medical and nursing professions. It is integral to maintaining the standards that Australians expect from their healthcare practitioners.

In July 2024 health ministers from all states, territories and the Commonwealth approved amendments to the national law. These amendments addressed significant concerns surrounding practitioners who engage in sexual or other serious misconduct. The bill before us today seeks to give effect to these amendments. The public has the right to know if their healthcare provider has a regulatory history relating to sexual misconduct. Transparency in this area is essential as it allows people to make informed decisions regarding their health care.

This bill will require national boards and the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, Ahpra, to publish additional information on the national registers about practitioners found by a tribunal to have engaged in professional misconduct involving sexual misconduct. This includes the tribunal's findings, sanctions imposed and a link to or copy of the tribunal's reasons. This reform is vital, because professional misconduct of a sexual nature is the most serious form of misconduct under the national law. It fundamentally breaches the trust placed in healthcare practitioners, causing harm to patients and damaging the community's confidence in healthcare services.

In 2024 Ahpra reported over 1,156 complaints of professional boundary violations including sexual misconduct, representing a 37.5 per cent increase from the previous year. Of these, 174 complaints related to practitioners in Queensland. As the member for Pumicestone, I know that health care is a top priority of our community. Recently our health minister visited the Pumicestone electorate, highlighting the ongoing commitment to ensuring that healthcare services in our region remain safe, reliable and trustworthy. Pumicestone is home to many dedicated healthcare professionals who serve our community with integrity and compassion. Last week I met with locals Roxy and Kim, who work at the Bribie Island Satellite Health Centre providing exceptional client care and who know how important it is that our community members feel safe and supported when seeing their nurse or doctor. It is essential that we uphold the trust that patients place in our healthcare providers. This bill will help ensure that residents in Pumicestone and across Queensland feel confident when accessing healthcare services.

The bill also makes it an offence to engage in reprisals against individuals who make complaints about registered health practitioners or provide assistance to regulators. This protection is crucial for maintaining a safe environment for complainants to come forward without fear of retaliation.

Furthermore, the bill prevents health practitioners and healthcare employers from using non-disclosure agreements to limit a person's right to make a complaint. Such agreements will be deemed void if they restrict the reporting of misconduct. This change ensures that any attempt to silence victims through legal means is firmly prohibited.

Another important aspect of the bill is the introduction of reinstatement orders. Practitioners whose registration has been cancelled or has been disqualified must now obtain a reinstatement order from a tribunal before applying to the national board for re-registration. This measure aligns Queensland with New South Wales and ensures that practitioners cannot easily return to practise after committing misconduct without thorough oversight.

Consultation on these reforms began in January 2024 involving patient advocacy groups, sexual violence support organisations and professional bodies and the public. The consultation process received 217 submissions, most of which were supportive of the proposed changes. While there were some concerns, particularly around privacy and potential delays in reinstatement processes, these have been carefully balanced to ensure that the public's right to safety remains our priority.

The cost of implementing these changes will be managed within the existing resources allocated under the Queensland budget, with significant support already planned for QCAT to manage reinstatement order cases. The reforms are not just about holding practitioners accountable but also about ensuring public safety remains the cornerstone of our healthcare system. This bill sends a strong message that Queensland will not tolerate sexual misconduct within our healthcare system. It upholds the right of patients to know whom they can trust with their care and ensures health practitioners are held to the highest standards of professional conduct.

As the member for Pumicestone, I am committed to ensuring that my community has access to safe and trustworthy healthcare services. By supporting this bill, we not only protect the residents of Pumicestone but also strengthen the integrity of health care across Queensland. I urge all members to support this important bill. By doing so, we will protect the public and restore trust in our healthcare system and demonstrate our commitment to maintain the integrity of healthcare professionals.