




Speech By
Corrine McMillan

MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD

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HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms McMillan** (Mansfield—ALP) (4.14 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. At the outset, I acknowledge the Metro South Hospital and Health Service for the number of very professional clinicians who deliver outstanding care in our hospitals on Brisbane's south side.

The bill proposes changes to the Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011. It would require that at least one member of each hospital and health service board be a clinician currently employed or engaged by the relevant hospital and health service. The government says the bill is about putting clinical staff back in charge of hospitals. However, this does not hold up when you look at the details, as clearly outlined by the member for Greenslopes. Further, this LNP government says it wants to listen to health professionals, but where is that commitment when clinicians speak out in support of gender affirming care? Where is it when experts call for pill testing to save lives?

The LNP cannot have it both ways. They cannot claim they listen to health workers when the truth is they only listen when it suits their far-right agenda. This contradiction is an issue that many in my community have raised with me and I dare say the good people of Clayfield are also well aware of this dichotomy. Those who know, know and they are aghast at this inconsistency and absolute nonsense. Before this bill, the legislation already required that each board include at least one clinician. Out of the 16 hospital and health services in Queensland, 13 already have at least one person with a clinical background in a senior position—that is, chair, deputy chair or health service chief executive. This change is just a smokescreen to cover up the LNP's disgraceful track record with our frontline health workers and it is playing out right now.

In correspondence to the Health, Environment and Innovation Committee, the Queensland Integrity Commissioner pointed out several problems with the model the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services has provided. They raised the risk of conflicts of interest if those clinicians work on the front line of the same service they are overseeing and other issues involving personal interest such as matters impacting their colleagues and close work friends. The Integrity Commissioner also raised concerns about the employer/employee relationship. HHS employees report to the health service chief executive. However, if the employee also serves on the board then, in their board capacity, the chief executive is accountable to them; in their employee capacity the employee remains accountable to the chief executive. The Integrity Commissioner noted this relationship will contain the potential for significant conflicts or at least perceived conflicts. The Integrity Commissioner advised that management plans to address such conflicts could be complex and administratively onerous.

In this House, we have a duty to assess whether the complexity and cost of this amendment are justified or if a simpler model could achieve the same results in the public interest. Some stakeholders agree that there is a better model, one that involves consulting employees and gathering their input when performing the functions of the board. Stakeholders have also supported continuing the current approach where clinical board members remain actively engaged in healthcare practice to stay in touch

with frontline issues. The government has not explained how it will manage the significant conflicts of interest in this arrangement. That is why we will not be supporting the amendments contained in part 2 of the bill.

The bill also amends the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act 1998 to fast-track the destruction of seized vaping products and to enable courts to order persons convicted of an offence under the act to pay reasonable costs incurred as a result of the offence. We are in a position where we will always work to crack down on illicit vapes that harm our children and our communities. I am proud to have been a part of the former Labor government that passed tobacco and vaping laws that carried the harshest penalties in this country. While we support the principle of the amendments of this part of the bill, we highlight the short-sightedness and missed opportunities of the approach taken by the LNP government.

The committee heard from the Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association of Australia. They identified a number of barriers to the safe disposal of the products. The explanatory notes explain that lithium ion batteries in vaping products can leak, overheat or explode. Those products also contain hazardous substances such as liquid nicotine, heavy metals and carcinogens. Their plastic components do not break down, which causes harm to the environment.

The Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association advised the committee that up to 12,000 fires have been caused by incorrect battery disposal. In Queensland alone 200 battery related fires were reported in the last year. The costs from these fires are significant. For example, the Cairns Regional Council is facing an estimated \$30 million cost from a single fire—

Mr NICHOLLS: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. This is a repeat of the arguments that were put by the member for Pine Rivers in relation to councils and those sorts of things, and I would ask you to return the member to the subject matter of the bill.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Marr): I make it very clear that the Speaker told us earlier this morning that one phrase or sentence or a written or oral submission to a committee, a committee report or a statement of reservation or dissenting statement cannot become an alternate debate on the debate of the bill. Member for Mansfield, I ask you to keep that in mind as you proceed, please.

Ms McMILLAN: With all due respect, the Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association was a submitter to this bill. I have spent nearly nine years in this place, and I have been the chair of a committee, a deputy chair and a shadow minister. The Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association was a submitter to this bill, and I am simply quoting from the submission.

Mr NICHOLLS: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance, again, but also on the conduct of the member for Mansfield in reflecting on the chair regarding your ruling and your guidance.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Mansfield, I know you are trying to stay within the scope of the bill. Please do not question my ruling, and make sure you stay within the bill.

Ms McMILLAN: Thank you for your guidance, Madam Deputy Speaker. I acknowledge, as does the opposition, the contribution of the Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association and its support of the organisations that it advocates for and represents and the work that it does in our communities. I also acknowledge the many fires that have occurred in local council dumps—a total of 200 in the last year.

Mr NICHOLLS: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance, again. This is the third attempt by the member for Mansfield to go to a matter not covered by the subject matter of this bill by simply referring to a submission made by a submitter group that has no relevance to the policy, to the bearing of the bill or to the words in the bill itself.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will get some further advice. Member for Mansfield, in the submission it actually says that they have gone broader than the scope of the bill, which is what you are actually commenting on. Can I please ask you to keep that in mind and go back to the bill.

Ms McMILLAN: I also acknowledge the immense impact that vaping and vaping products have on our young people. I acknowledge that there are many vaping stores illegally operating in my electorate. I have written to the minister and to the Department of Health about those stores, particularly the ones that are close to major schools. Vaping poses a significant risk to the young people of our community.

When I was growing up, smoking posed a similar risk. We saw the impact that smoking and the tobacco industry had on the young people of Australia with their convincing marketing. It is thanks to people like Dr Jeannette Young and others who were significant advocates for change in relation to

smoking in Queensland. Sadly, we have seen the vaping industry replace the tobacco industry. The tobacco industry was very effective in convincing young people to take up smoking, and the vaping industry is doing the same.

I endorse the bill with the exception, as I mentioned in my speech, of the amendments contained in part 2 of the bill. Again, I thank all of the public health workers in my electorate at the PA Hospital, the QEII Hospital, the nurse-led clinic and, of course, the Eight Mile Plains satellite hospital. I still refer to it as the satellite hospital, as does the rest of my community. It will take a long time for us to get used to the changed name of the satellite hospital—old habits die hard. As I mentioned, I commend the bill to the House with the exception of the amendments contained in part 2 of the bill.