




Speech By
Hon. Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. DR LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, Minister for Manufacturing and Minister for Regional and Rural Development) (7.38 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, which is even more proof that the Crisafulli government is delivering on its promises and addressing the issues that are important to Queenslanders. This is a great day to be able to stand here and abolish two taxes in this state.

I want to start with the issue of health services and the patients tax. That is centred around the ongoing doctor shortage right across my electorate. Many times I have stood in this place and talked about doctor shortages in the great community of Clermont, a community that was without a permanent hospital doctor for more than five years. In Bowen there is currently a drastic shortage of GPs which has gone so far as to limit service to that town's largest aged-care facility, Murroona Gardens. That is having a big impact on their ability to open up beds for elderly clients and also to meet their obligations in terms of ongoing medical assessments of those clients. If you add to that the recent closure of the Sonic HealthPlus facility at Moranbah, you begin to understand how serious the doctor shortage is.

A couple of years ago I took the federal government's rural health commissioner on a trip through the electorate. She was astounded at the doctor shortage and what that meant for small communities and the distances people were travelling to access medical services. In some cases they were making round trips of nine or 10 hours to see a GP. Without doubt, the GP shortage in rural and regional Queensland is something that we will have to continue to work on. I know that the health minister is committed to addressing that issue in consultation with the federal government, because both levels of government need to work together if we are going to address the GP shortage.

I will tell honourable members a local story. For just over 10 years now Dr Sarat Tata has operated the Home Hill Surgery. He started on his own. His practice now boasts five GPs. It operates seven days a week offering allied health care, dental, pathology and physiotherapy services. It is an amazing service that has experienced phenomenal growth. It has only been made possible as a result of Dr Tata taking calculated risks. You have to take your hat off to him. He started on his own and he put it all on the line. He now services patients as far north as Townsville and as far south as Bowen. Prior to the election Dr Tata said that the risk posed by Labor's patient tax led him to consider the need to delay or even cancel plans for future growth and that it could significantly reduce his ability to recruit doctors to the area.

The risk posed by Labor's patient tax is real. The risk that Queenslanders would have reduced access to GPs is real. At best, communities faced stagnation while the now Deputy Leader of the Opposition refused to act. Unlike those opposite we are addressing risk, and that is exactly what this bill does. Those opposite may say that this bill is only required because of a scare campaign, but they should ask their constituents whom they trust. Do they trust the Labor MP who denied this tax posed a problem, or do they trust their local family GP? Do they trust the current shadow health minister, who described the risk as a 'beat-up', or do they trust medical professionals?

The President of AMAQ, Dr Nick Yim, said that uncertainty would remain for GPs if this tax was not scrapped once and for all. Dr Cath Hester, Queensland Chair of the RACGP, focused more on patients when she said, 'This will help to improve access to affordable GP care.' There you have it, Mr Deputy Speaker: senior Queensland representatives of two key medical industries agreed that this bill will reduce uncertainty for GPs and improve access to affordable care for patients.

Touching briefly on other amendments relating to home ownership, the fact is that since 1971 home ownership rates in Queensland have dropped. Over the last year Queensland's rate of first home buyers has been eclipsed by every other mainland state. By abolishing stamp duty for first home buyers who purchase a new home after 1 May, the Crisafulli government is providing a boost for both first home buyers and the building industry. Our actions are not just about the short term, with the inclusion of vacant land on which a first home buyer intends to build their home. Only last weekend a young couple were looking at two blocks opposite where I live with a view to building their first home. When you look at the prices they are selling those blocks for and the cost of building a house, you suddenly appreciate the challenge facing first home buyers and young couples as they try to move into home ownership in this state.

This move, along with allowing stamp duty concession recipients to rent out a room, is backed by the REIQ, the Urban Development Institute, the HIA and the Strata Community Association. It is relieving cost-of-living pressures, and during the campaign we knew that was front and centre for a lot of Queenslanders. Those cost-of-living pressures were reflected right across the board, and removing that stamp duty will make a big difference to a lot of young people trying to get into their first home. The *Courier-Mail* last week contained a comment by the opposition leader. He said that he would 'look at what the experts say' when considering his party's position. My challenge to the Leader of the Opposition is a simple one: do what you said would you do. Listen to the experts and support this bill.