




Speech By  
**Hon. Laura Gerber**

**MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN**

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Record of Proceedings, 3 April 2025

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

 **Hon. LJ GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Youth Justice and Victim Support and Minister for Corrective Services) (4.41 pm): I rise to make a small contribution to this bill. As members may know, before I became the member for Currumbin in this House, I was a federal prosecutor with the Commonwealth DPP. I was also a disciplinary prosecutor with the Office of the Health Ombudsman. It was my job as a disciplinary prosecutor with the Office of the Health Ombudsman to prosecute cases of the nature that this bill aims to protect Queenslanders from. It was my job to prosecute health practitioners for matters of serious misconduct and sexual assault. I want to specifically address the aspects of this bill that deal with that.

This bill aims to increase transparency for the public around disciplinary action against health practitioners who have been found by a tribunal to have engaged in serious sexual misconduct. I want to give the House some context as to how those disciplinary prosecutions occur and what this transparency means for the public. In the course of a disciplinary prosecution—I will use the Office of the Health Ombudsman as an example because that is where my experience lies—a member of the public would make a complaint to the Office of the Health Ombudsman about conduct that a registered health practitioner had made against them. The Office of the Health Ombudsman would investigate that complaint and initiate an investigation if there was substance to that complaint. That investigation turns up evidence and a brief is put together. That brief is given to the prosecution division of the Office of the Health Ombudsman, the division that I was a part of. Then, that prosecution division gets the director of proceedings to initiate claims in QCAT in order to hold that registered health practitioner to account for their conduct.

Alongside those disciplinary proceedings there is often a criminal charge of sexual assault, or a criminal charge in relation to the conduct of the health practitioner, but the disciplinary proceedings protect the community from that health practitioner by preventing them from being able to practice in the future or continuing to register—even if they move interstate. The mechanism is that the national board, Ahpra, has a registration process. If the registered health practitioner is found to have engaged in professional misconduct, which of course is the highest category that they can be found to have engaged in, then there is a notification that occurs on their registration. If that health practitioner stops practising for a while, deregisters and then wants to go back to practising, sometimes that registration—that disciplinary action—does not follow them. This change allows for the national board to publish information on the public registers and for the tribunal's findings to be available for the public in relation to that health practitioner if they decide to try to re-register.

That is important because the public can look these practitioners up. You can go onto the Ahpra website. You can type in the last name of your medical practitioner—whether it be your nurse, your doctor, your physiotherapist or your orthopaedic practitioner—and you can see their registration and confirm that they are registered with Ahpra. You can also see notifications. You can also see whether

or not that practitioner has been a part of disciplinary proceedings. The fact that this bill now allows for the professional misconduct finding of sexual misconduct to be registered and to follow that practitioner on their registration allows the community to have some confidence and feel safe about the health care they are getting and the practitioners who they are engaging. There is a great level of trust that we as community members, when engaging a health practitioner, invest in our health practitioners for the service that they give to us. There is a level of trust that puts that health practitioner in a position of power over the patient. That dynamic means they should be held to a higher standard. That position of power that they have, where they are trusted, where the information they give us sometimes is not questioned and where they are able to be in positions of power over patients. This bill allows for a level of transparency and public confidence.

I want to commend the health minister for the way he has brought this bill into the House and the way he has conducted himself throughout the course of this bill's scrutiny, particularly during the committee process. Our health minister has engaged in a really deep, consultative process to ensure these laws that are before the House are the best they can be and that ultimately they protect the public.

The Crisafulli government is all about public safety and protecting the rights of victims. Every Queenslanders has the right to be able to look up their health practitioner to ensure the person they are placing their trust in for the medical services they require is, in fact, an upstanding citizen, is registered and does not have any professional misconduct findings against them. It is a very good bill. It is a very good law, and I am pleased that now sexual misconduct findings will be registered and will follow that practitioner—no matter if they deregister. That is a very good outcome for Queensland.