




Speech By
Hon. Leanne Linard

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

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PRIVATE MEMBER STATEMENT

Health Services, Youth

 **Hon. LM LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (2.24 pm): Access to health care should never be determined by ideology, yet under this LNP government young people are being denied essential, evidence-based health services that exist to keep them safe. Earlier this year the government quietly halted access to gender-affirming care for young people in the public health system. Clinics were paused. Referrals were closed. Families were left without guidance or support. It has since been reported that not a single person who worked on the cabinet submission or the health directive had any expertise in supporting trans children. In fact, the online meeting in which the directive was given lasted all of 22 minutes. That is not what listening to experts looks like.

It is a political ideology deciding who can and cannot access health care. Gender-affirming care is not experimental; it is endorsed by every major medical and psychological body in this country, and it saves lives. It allows young people to access professional, supervised care that supports their identity and wellbeing. Denying that care does not protect young people; it isolates them and increases risk. We are seeing a disturbing pattern: a government that claims to listen to experts but systematically silences them. The same disregard for evidence that halted gender-affirming care has extended to harm reduction services.

Last year, under the former Labor government, Queensland became the first state in the nation to establish pill testing services. These clinics were free, voluntary and confidential. They connected young people to doctors, nurses and health educators who provided real-time interventions and potentially life-saving information. It was an evidence-based, compassionate approach that focused on harm minimisation, not ideology. Last year the LNP shut down those services and stripped them of public funding. A few weeks ago they went even further by banning pill testing altogether, right before thousands of young people arrive at schoolies. This year they will be there without life-saving and harm-reducing services not because the evidence demanded it but because the politics suited them.

Whether it is trans young people seeking gender-affirming care or young people accessing pill testing at schoolies, the story is the same: evidence-based healthcare services are being replaced by political ideology under this LNP government. Labor's position is clear: we believe in health care guided by evidence, compassion and respect. There is no safe way to take illicit drugs, but pill testing saves lives. Gender-affirming care is not political; it is medical and it is necessary. Labor will always stand up for young Queenslanders in this state and their right to access health care safely and with dignity. When governments ignore evidence and silence experts, it is young people who pay the price.