




Speech By
Sandy Bolton

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Record of Proceedings, 12 June 2025

HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (5.20 pm): This bill, as we have heard, amends the legislation controlling the appointment of hospital and health boards so they must have as a member one clinician who works in that particular health service. It also amends the tobacco control legislation to streamline the seizure and destruction of illegal vapes.

The first of these implements an election commitment of our new government that frontline staff be added to the board of every hospital and health service. In practice, this has been implemented by changing the current requirement that each of the 16 hospital and health boards have at least one clinician on the board to having one clinician who is also employed by that health service. Queensland Health said this requirement will enable the clinician to bring a unique, on-the-ground perspective to the board. However, as has been raised, this is already occurring via other board positions, and specifically appointing a local clinician means they will definitely have conflicts of interest. This is partly addressed in the bill with a requirement that a local clinician cannot be appointed chair or deputy chair given the management roles of those positions. However, as the Integrity Commissioner advised, conflicts remain where the board considers issues relevant to the clinician's area of employment and their role as employer and employee of the CEO.

As the report states, the Integrity Commissioner questioned whether the bill as drafted is the only way of achieving the policy objectives. While the report said that there was strong support for this change, there were only 12 submissions on the bill and three-quarters of them did not even cover these changes. A preferable process to identify the approach would have been a longer consultative process working with the community to examine the best way to achieve local frontline input, including from the primary health networks, which did not submit yet have critical interactions and interdependencies with hospitals. Even though I agree that there is an increased potential for conflicts of interest regarding the hospital boards, the response from the Queensland Integrity Commissioner gave reassurance that the statutory requirements for disclosing and managing conflicts of interest are appropriate to ensure this does not occur.

The second part of the bill deals with the enforcement by the state health department of the Commonwealth ban on recreational vapes and the seizing and storing of illegal vapes prior to destruction. I will not go into the history of vapes, illegal or legal, as it has been covered sufficiently in this chamber. However, both state and federal governments of either colour have dropped the ball on this in terms of the early warnings when they were first made available. That is all I will say on that.

I return to the amendment which deals with the forfeiture and destruction of vaping goods promptly upon seizure and to mitigate the safety risks associated with storing them for extended periods. This is because they are highly flammable and contain embedded lithium ion batteries that can overheat or explode.

The Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association of Australia pointed out that the safe management and disposal of unwanted vapes is not just an issue for the health department; it is one for the whole recycling industry. It is not just batteries in vapes but also batteries in e-scooters and a whole range of other devices that have become a major issue. The waste association emphasised the urgent attention needed—

Mr NICHOLLS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. We have been through this with a number of speakers already. This is beyond the scope of the bill. The submission from the waste management association acknowledges it is beyond the scope of the bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kempton): I take your point of order. Member, try to stay within the confines of the bill, if you would. There have been previous rulings—

Ms BOLTON: Mr Deputy Speaker—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Do not argue with me.

Ms BOLTON: I am not arguing with you. I thought I was being relevant—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Listen to me, please, for a moment. There have been previous rulings about this tonight—about moving into that component of the bill—by the previous Deputy Speaker. I will ask you to stay within the confines of the bill, thank you.

Ms BOLTON: As a member of that committee, I will go to what was raised and what I will say can be achieved. While Queensland Health did respond that its responsibility in this arena is limited, the government as a whole should move forward and not say it is too hard. The issue of addressing circular economy objectives and establishing whole-of-life product stewardship for waste products starting with vapes and batteries is imperative.

Mr NICHOLLS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. Nothing in this bill goes to the circular economy. This goes to the destruction of vapes. The submission by the waste management association itself acknowledges it is outside the scope of the bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, I will give you one opportunity to explain how this is relevant to the bill. If I have to warn you again I will ask you to take your seat.

Ms BOLTON: I believe it is relevant because I would like to see a new inquiry sent to either the Health, Environment and Innovation Committee or another appropriate committee to look at a whole-of-life product stewardship scheme as is done in other jurisdictions.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, this is my last warning. I am asking you to go back to the bill. This is your last warning.

Ms BOLTON: Thank you. I would like to thank my fellow committee members, our chair and secretariat for their work on this inquiry and thank all who gave valuable feedback to our committee including what needs to be done.