




Speech By  
**Sean Dillon**

**MEMBER FOR GREGORY**

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**HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr DILLON** (Gregory—LNP) (5.39 pm): Listening to the contribution from the member for Toohey, I was drawn by the fact that he, along with so many of his Labor colleagues, continues to be fascinated with this conflict-of-interest provision which continues a long history in this place and in their unfortunate governance of this state to remove people from any role with which they may have experience or, heaven forbid, about which they know what goes on. This legislation moves to restore that. Here today and in the preceding years in this place we have seen Labor continue to remove anyone who might have any knowledge of how to actually make something work.

I rise today in strong support of this legislation and congratulate the minister. What a wonderful job the health minister has done, in the short time he has had in this role, to rectify some serious deficiencies both by regulation and in this particular case through legislation. I congratulate him for the work that he and also the parliamentary committee have done in this place. This is a bill that speaks directly to the core values of the Crisafulli LNP government: restoring integrity to public administration, empowering those on the front line and protecting the health of every Queenslanders whether they live in Brisbane or Boulia, Charleville or Chermide.

For the people of Gregory and communities across regional and remote Queensland, this bill delivers two major reforms that will have a real and lasting impact. First, it ensures that frontline clinicians—the boots on the ground in our rural hospitals—are given a voice and a seat at the table. Second, it enables tough, decisive action against the vaping and illicit tobacco epidemic that is sweeping through our schools, small towns and remote communities.

Let me speak first to the amendment to the Hospital and Health Boards Act. For far too long the experience and local knowledge of regional Queensland's doctors, nurses, midwives and allied health staff were ignored by those opposite regarding regional public health governance. In the bush our regional health professionals are at the heart of our communities. They deliver babies at 2 am and they are our lifeline when tragedy strikes on an outback road or cattle station. By ensuring that a clinician with direct patient care responsibilities sits on every hospital and health board the Crisafulli LNP government is putting people in the room who understand the consequences of their decisions and also understand that remote health care requires contemporary solutions. These clinicians will bring their knowledge of local cases, transport limitations, patient conditions and medical urgency into the decision-making process. This is where the reforms in this bill matter deeply.

By legislating that at least one practising clinician must serve on every hospital and health board the Crisafulli government is building a mechanism for clinical advocacy from within the governance structure itself. That means that these clinicians, grounded in real-world experience, working in the hospital system week in and week out, will now have a formal role in influencing how health policy is applied on the ground. They will be in the room when decisions are made about resourcing, appeals and procedural frameworks. They will be empowered to speak for the patient and their carer who live

800 kilometres from the nearest specialist. They will understand why an oncology patient simply cannot withstand a 12-hour road trip when flights are available. They will advocate for procedural fairness, clinical appropriateness and genuine regional equity.

For remote and regional Queenslanders who often feel like decisions are made about them rather than with them, this reform puts someone at the table who understand their circumstances firsthand. More importantly, it empowers rural clinicians who have long fought to get their voices heard. It validates their expertise and experience, it creates pathways for evidence-based advocacy and it sends a powerful signal that local, qualified experience matters in public health governance. This bill does not just improve the governance of our health boards, it also improves the lived experience of the people our health system is meant to serve. Whether it is access to specialist care or just having someone speak up when a policy does not make sense or suit their local needs, this reform gives clinicians the voice they deserve and their patients the outcomes they need.

This bill also cracks down hard on one of the fastest growing threats to community health in Queensland: the flood of illegal vapes and tobacco products saturating our regions. This government will not stand by while that happens. Under the leadership of the Crisafulli LNP government we have already seized over a quarter of a million vapes and led the nation's largest enforcement action, Operation Appaloosa, which took more than 19 million illegal cigarettes off the street along with tonnes of loose tobacco. However, success brings new challenges.

These products are hazardous to store. They pose risks of fire, environmental contamination and community exposure. Right now we are forced to keep them for weeks just to satisfy an outdated process. This bill changes that. With the new amendments to the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act, seized vapes and illicit goods can be forfeited and destroyed immediately—no more waiting, no more risks and no more taxpayer money spent storing contraband that should never have reached our communities in the first place. This bill also introduces a cost recovery mechanism because it is time that peddlers of poison pay their own way. If you deal you will not only face the toughest fines in the nation but also be forced to cover the cost of enforcement. That is justice, it is deterrence and it is what the people of Queensland expect.

Let me be very clear that this bill is about protecting our next generation. It is about making sure that a year 8 student in Barcaldine or Blackwater does not walk out of an illegal premises with a vape hidden in their schoolbag. It is about making sure that rural hospital and health boards have clinicians who understand the reality of treating a stroke when there is no CT diagnostic capability or delivering palliative care when the next of kin is six hours away. This bill is rural health reform, this bill is public health protection, and this bill is another demonstration of how the Crisafulli LNP government governs not just for the south-east corner, but for every Queenslanders no matter what their postcode. I support this bill and especially commend this reform to every rural Queenslanders who has ever felt invisible within their own health system.