


Queensland Parliament Hansard Green

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SUBJECT: (no subject found)

MEMBER: Mrs LAUGA

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (4.14 pm): Today I rise to speak in support of the Health Transparency Bill, which will enable the collection and publication of information from private and public health facilities and residential aged-care facilities. It will make our healthcare system safer. This bill will enable elderly residents and their families to make informed decisions when choosing a service. This is about making sure that our parents and grandparents and loved ones are treated with respect, dignity and appropriate levels of care. We are sick of dodgy contractors and greedy owners exploiting vulnerable Queenslanders for profit. Even though the federal government is responsible for the sector's regulation, this is one way we can make them more accountable.

This legislation will help open up private and public facilities to similar levels of scrutiny which will help improve the care provided to older Queenslanders. Queensland families want to know that if their loved one gives their life savings to a company to care for them in their old age exactly what they are paying for. Enough staff with the right skill mix to care for them, or another Lamborghini for the CEO? The Health Transparency Bill will create a standalone legislative framework to collect and publish information from public and private health facilities and public and private residential aged-care facilities. Consumers will be able to view and compare this information on a new interactive website. Residential aged-care facilities will be asked to report their average daily resident care hours quarterly. Private residential aged-care facilities can choose not to report this information, but their decision to opt out will be highlighted beside their name on the new website.

The bill also requires Queensland Health's residential aged-care facilities to have a minimum nurse skill mix of 50 per cent and for 30 per cent of the total care staff to be registered nurses. These residential aged-care facilities must also provide a minimum average of 3.65 hours of nursing and personal care to residents daily. I visit the nursing homes, both the public and private nursing centres and aged-care facilities, in my electorate four times a year—for Mother's Day, Father's Day, Easter and Christmas. I visit the North Rockhampton Nursing Centre, the Capricorn Adventist Retirement Village, Bolton Clarke Sunset Ridge and Blue Care's Capricorn Gardens. The North Rockhampton Nursing Centre is a Queensland government facility operated very proudly by the Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service. This facility was being prepared for sale by the LNP when those opposite were in government in Queensland. They wanted to sell it off to the highest bidder and privatise this important public health facility in Central Queensland. Those opposite do not care about quality public aged care. They stripped back the North Rockhampton Nursing Centre to make it look as profitable as possible on paper for prospective buyers.

I speak with residents, their families, staff and management at each of the facilities I visit. I see the tireless work that the staff do to help residents and on several occasions staff have spoken to me about the need to make changes to improve safety and staffing levels. Older Australians—those who cared for us as we grew—are entitled to affordable, accessible and high-quality aged-care services delivered by a professionally trained, accredited and dedicated workforce. Caring for elderly people, especially those with behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia and other disabling health conditions, is a stressful occupation requiring the right people with the right knowledge and skills to develop and implement holistic care plans customised to individual needs.

There is so much more work that needs to be done to bring the standard of aged care in Australia up to the standard that Australians expect. This legislation introduced by the Palaszczuk Labor government is a step in the right direction. Aged care is primarily a federal government responsibility and the Morrison LNP government has been absent on this issue. The Prime Minister seems happy to take responsibility for calling the royal commission into aged care but refuses to acknowledge that it was his aged-care cuts and the Liberals in action that led to it. Older Australians deserve better. The Morrison LNP government is still yet to introduce a serious incident response scheme that would respond to incidents of assault in Australia's aged-care system. Scott Morrison must act immediately to ensure that older Australians get the quality aged-care services that they need.

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Scott Morrison and the LNP are responsible for cutting billions of dollars from aged care, including \$1.2 billion from residential care in the 2016 federal budget, \$500 million from residential care in the 2015 MYEFO, and \$100 million from the dementia and severe behaviour supplement in the 2014 budget.

For more than a year the Morrison government has been sitting on a comprehensive report on building the workforce that Australia's aged-care system requires, but there is no evidence that it has fully responded to even one of the report's 14 actions. In fact, earlier this year the author of the report gave evidence at the royal commission that the government would not even respond to his requests for an update on how it was progressing each of his recommendations. This is just not good enough. I call on the member for member for Capricornia, those opposite and the federal LNP to stand up for Central Queensland aged-care residents and their families and the staff of my local facilities and call for urgent changes to improve our aged-care system. I commend the bill to the House.