

## HEALTH SERVICES AMENDMENT BILL 2021

### *Second Reading*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

**DR J. KRISHNAN (Riverton)** [12.43 pm]: I rise today to commend the Health Services Amendment Bill 2021 to the house. The Health Services Act 2016 commenced operation on 1 July 2016. It was supposed to clarify the roles and responsibilities of each level of the system to run the health system efficiently. The framework recognises that the minister is ultimately responsible to the Parliament and public but following commencement of the act, the Department of Health identified that there were certain parts of the act that were not operating the way they were supposed to operate. This amending bill is about creating remedies for unintended operational issues, correcting drafting errors and giving certainty to provisions identified as having an ambiguous interpretation. The amendments in the bill have been made to ensure the effectiveness of the act so that it can be relied upon to drive performance, accountability and decision-making closer to patient care.

I turn to some of the key areas of the amendment bill. First, the bill will amend the minister's powers to allow the minister to delegate his functions and responsibilities more effectively. When we delegate a task, we create followers; when we delegate authority, we create leaders. This amendment is about giving more powers to the minister to efficiently delegate to create more leaders in the health sector to bring about better health outcomes for the people of Western Australia. After being elected to Parliament, I had to walk away from my responsibility of managing medical practices. When I was handing over this responsibility to my daughter, I thought for a long time about what advice I should be giving her. I just replicated the advice I received from a senior GP 10 years back. He advised me, "As important as it is to work in the business, it is important to work on the business." This bill is about allowing the Minister for Health to work on the health system, not in the health system. It will allow the authority to delegate powers so they can work on the system, rather than in the system.

The second amendment will amend part 6 of the act to make sure that the health service provider can recover fees more effectively when that is needed. As an example, when I was working as a GP, I had many instances in which a worker walked in with a foreign body in their eye. My priority was to treat the patient, so I removed the foreign body, provided the necessary treatment and charged Medicare for the service. Subsequently, the patient decided to make a workers' compensation claim. When the claim was determined, the insurance company made a payment; Medicare had already made a payment, but the insurance company made a payment, which is double dipping. This amendment bill is about allowing health practitioners to claim money when their expenses have been met by the public health system but reimbursed at a later date by the insurance company for whatever reason.

The third amendment is about better clarity and financial management. This McGowan Labor government has had a record surplus and has made a record \$1.9 billion investment in health in the 2021–22 budget on top of what was already being invested in health. This is about bringing about better health outcomes for every Western Australian. Having greater clarity in the financial management of the health system is important and this amendment will bring that about.

The fourth amendment will rectify the Western Australian health system's complex land management and ownership issues. Big capital investment has happened in the past and there are also major capital works in the pipeline to create infrastructure for the future. But land management is always confusing, in terms of which board owns the land and which board is building infrastructure on it. This amendment will bring more clarity to that matter.

The next amendment is about strengthening the duties of the board members under the act so that they are more productive; they will be expected to deliver what they are expected to deliver. Another amendment will refine the director general's powers of inquiry to allow the inquirer to enter and inspect health service premises. A lot of the time, an in-person inspection of a health service will provide more clarity to an inquiry than just going through a hearing process. There will be a new framework for the delivery of capital and maintenance works. The role of system manager will be defined to increase productivity and bring about better health outcomes. The management of health service employees will be improved as well.

The sustainable health review was all about bringing about better integrated health care, and focused on prevention, community-related health services and managing health more efficiently post-the COVID-19 pandemic. These amendments will only make things better for the health minister and the government to deliver better health services. I commend the bill to the house and thank you for the opportunity, Madam Acting Speaker.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

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