

SECOND READING SPEECH

THE HON LARA GIDDINGS MP

DEPUTY PREMIER, MINISTER FOR HEALTH

Public Health Amendment (Cervical Screening) Bill 2009

Mr Speaker,

- I move that the Bill now be read a second time.
- Australia enjoys one of the lowest incidences of cervical cancer in the world. This is due, largely, to a coordinated approach to cervical cancer under the National Cervical Screening Program.
- National guidelines for the management of cervical cancer screening and treatment were updated in 2005. This update replaced guidelines that had been in place since 1994. Since the endorsement of the 2005 guidelines, States, Territories and the Australian Government have been working to standardise screening and treatment data collections across each of the eight cervical cancer test registers in Australia.
- In Tasmania, information relating to a woman's cervical screening and treatment history is recorded on the Cervical Cytology Register, maintained by the Director of Public Health under the Public Health Act 1997.
- The Public Health Amendment (Cervical Screening) Bill 2009 aims to bring the role and functions of the register up to date to ensure that it can continue to operate to protect the health of Tasmanian women.
- The Bill changes the name of the Tasmanian register to, 'The Cervical Screening Register'. This change is made in recognition of the fact that the register records more than just cytology

information about a woman. The type of information recorded by the register is set out in clause 7 of the Bill.

- Importantly, the new provisions will enable the Tasmanian register to record HPV vaccination information about a woman. Members will note that in 2007, the Australian Government introduced an immunisation program against Human Papillomavirus (HPV). HPV is recognised as a leading cause of cervical cancer, and the vaccination program aims to reduce the incidence of HPV in women.
- HPV information is currently only held by the National HPV Register maintained by the Victorian Government on behalf of the Australian Government. There is provision in the Australian Government's National Health Act 1953 for information held on this register to be shared with a cervical cancer register maintained by a state. This Bill will enable improved sharing of information between the HPV register and the Cervical Screening register in Tasmania so that the benefits of the HPV vaccination can be more accurately assessed.
- In addition to enabling information sharing with the national HPV register, the Bill allows for certain limited exchange of information with a woman's health practitioner, a pathology laboratory, Medicare Australia and a corresponding register in another Australian jurisdiction. There are important reasons for information to be shared with these other parties.
- Health practitioners and laboratories require sharing of the information contained on the register to ensure that they can make appropriate recommendations to a client following a cervical cancer test.
- Corresponding registers exist in each State and Territory in Australia. Each of those registers communicates with its interstate counterparts to ensure that a woman who moves from one jurisdiction to another can be traced in the event that she is overdue for her next cervical cancer test, or requires follow up treatment as a result of an inconclusive or abnormal cervical cancer test. This Bill ensures that the Tasmanian register has the capacity to share information for this purpose.

- There are instances where a woman moves to another jurisdiction and does not become known to the other jurisdiction until she has her next cervical cancer test. It is much more common for a woman to update her contact information with Medicare Australia. This Bill contains a provision to enable the sharing of information with Medicare Australia for the purposes of locating a woman in the event that the Tasmanian register needs to contact her. This is a safety net provision and is expected to be used only when other attempts to locate the woman have failed.
- The Bill maintains the position that information contained on the register cannot be shared with anyone unless it is for a specific purpose, provided for in the Act, or if the woman has given her consent to the information sharing. The Bill seeks to clarify precisely what the purposes for sharing are and it does this in clause 8.
- It is important to note that Cancer Screening Services Tasmania, which administers the register, does so under its own set of strict privacy guidelines. These guidelines are currently being updated to ensure that information held on the register is only shared with appropriate parties in appropriate circumstances, and always in compliance with the law. Sharing of personal information under the Bill will only occur where it is necessary in the interests of a woman's health.
- The Bill has been developed in consultation with Cancer Screening Services' consumer reference group, made up of community members from business, remote and rural, cultural and linguistically diverse and non-government sector organisations. Communication materials about the changes are being prepared in consultation with that reference group, test providers and Women Tasmania.
- I commend the Bill to the House.