




Speech By
Dr Christian Rowan

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

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COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (3.52 pm): I rise to address the COVID-19 Emergency Response and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. As my colleague, the Liberal National Party shadow Attorney-General and shadow minister for justice, the member for Clayfield, Tim Nicholls MP, has already indicated, and as with previous legislation brought to this House, this legislation seeks to again extend the provisions related to specific aspects of COVID-19 management and the Liberal National Party will be supporting this legislation today.

We are now into the second year of managing the COVID-19 health pandemic. With the continued rollout of the vaccination program here in Queensland and across Australia it is vital that those who are eligible to receive one of the available vaccines have an informed discussion with their relevant health professional, in most cases their general practitioner, in order to receive the most relevant and up-to-date, evidence based information.

In dealing with this evolving health pandemic, when it first arose, as we all know, governments and communities had to respond in extraordinary ways. In fact, as the Liberal National Party's shadow minister for education I wish to take this opportunity to briefly acknowledge that today marks the one-year anniversary since Queensland schools entered into five weeks of remote online learning in response to the COVID-19 health pandemic. It was certainly an extraordinary measure and a challenge that was ultimately met by our incredible schoolteachers, principals and staff, as well as dedicated parents and carers, all of whom worked together to ensure as best as possible the continuation of education for our students right across Queensland. There have been many sacrifices made and difficulties endured by all Queenslanders. I wish to especially thank and acknowledge all in our system of education for responding as they have to this challenge.

As a specialist physician and visiting medical officer to a number of large multispecialty tertiary hospitals here in Queensland, I was recently contacted to be vaccinated as a phase 1b eligible vaccine recipient. In order to keep vulnerable patients and other health professional colleagues safe I will take up this opportunity at the appropriate time in the coming weeks. I remind all Queenslanders of the success of vaccines and vaccination programs in controlling the spread of infectious diseases. The Queensland state government must also continue to work with the federal government on strategies to assist health agencies and the government of Papua New Guinea with controlling and suppressing the community transmission of COVID-19 given the close geographical proximity of many of our vulnerable Queensland communities in Cape York and the Torres Strait.

Returning to this current legislation, as per previous pieces of legislation this bill is seeking to extend the expiry date of emergency provisions which were enacted in response to the COVID-19 health pandemic. In this instance this legislation before the House today once enacted will extend the expiry date of provisions from 30 April 2021 to 30 September 2021. In total there are some approximately 14 acts, 20 regulations and other legislative instruments that this legislation covers with COVID-19 emergency health measures enabled with respect to matters including the attendance at

court and legal proceedings, the operation of bodies corporate and other matters pertaining to residential tenancies and rooming accommodation, leasing arrangements, including retail shop leases and other commercial leases, and the position of the Small Business Commissioner.

Additionally, there are other amendments that relate to changes to local government administrative and election arrangements, including the enabling of local government authorities to adjust rates and charges for the 2021-22 financial year, the ongoing ability to provide for flexibility with the facilitating of holding elections and by-elections in a COVID-safe manner and measures that will continue to enable local councils to conduct meetings in a COVID-safe way.

There is an important point that must be reiterated to the Palaszczuk state Labor government and that is that all emergency legislation that has been passed by this government under the auspices of responding to the COVID-19 health pandemic, including those that grant an extension of expiry provisions, must not be seen as substitutes for legislation that has been properly drafted and received proper scrutiny and consultation.

As I said at the beginning of my contribution, we are now in the second year of the COVID-19 health pandemic. The global response and research effort into combatting this infectious disease has been nothing short of remarkable and we know more about this pandemic than we did 12 months ago. That is why in continuing to extend these emergency provisions the Palaszczuk state Labor government must also be held accountable for the measures and extraordinary powers that it has been granted. Further, it is incumbent on the Palaszczuk state Labor government to continue to assess and review the necessity and efficacy of measures it has enacted and be prepared to reverse or disband any of those arrangements when the relevant circumstances permit.

In closing, I again reaffirm that this legislation will have the support of the Liberal National Party but that the government must not take this support as approval for indefinitely maintaining these measures or for indefinitely continuing to legislate in a manner where the circumstances clearly do not warrant it. Finally, I thank all members of the Economics and Governance Committee of the 57th Parliament for their examination of this legislation and associated report, report No. 6, as well as the committee secretariat and all stakeholders who contributed to the consideration of this legislation.