

Date: 4th March, 2022

Submission

To the Committee Secretary,

Committee Secretary
Community Support and Services Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

RE: Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2022

I write to the committee to clearly state my opposition to all parts of the Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2022.

Queenslanders have been living under a 'State of Emergency' for over 2 years and I am opposed to any further extensions of emergency powers. If this amendment bill is passed, Queenslanders will be living under a State of Emergency for nearly 3 years without appropriate justification.

Initially, passing the State of Emergency at the beginning of the covid pandemic was seen by the Queensland community as acceptable and justified. Our lack of knowledge about Covid and what it could do to our community required us as a society to tread on the side of caution. Two years on, we have a Queensland population that is now over 90% double vaccinated, over 50% with boosters. And the entire Queensland population has had the opportunity to obtain the vaccine. Queenslanders have adhered to lockdowns, vaccine mandates, mask restrictions, all in the hope that we would get through this and that eventually the Queensland Government, would lift all covid restrictions once the threat had subsided. It is clear from data being released from Government agencies, and further multiple scientific studies around the world, that the threat of Covid virus to society has now subsided. Covid is no longer a threat to human life now, the way we thought it was back in early 2020. Therefore, it is now time to allow Queenslanders the opportunity to live our lives, without a State of Emergency being held over us, when there is no justifiable threat based on our experiences to date of living with the covid virus.

Mandates have been put in place since 17th December 2021, and you just have to listen to the daily updates from the Health Minister, CHO, and the Premier to know that these vaccine mandates have not had limited impact on covid cases increasing, who has contracted the covid virus (both vaccinated or unvaccinated), or who is transmitting the virus (although I note that fully vaccinated citizens have been given the freedom to socialize without restrictions and since the mandates were put into place the virus numbers have increased dramatically).

Every person who has passed away from Covid over the last 2 years is in our hearts and their families in our prayers, because regardless of cause of death, the loss of them hurts. Recent ABS data released shows that over the last 22 months of this State of Emergency for Covid and Public Health, 273,901 people have passed away. Of that 273,901, 2,639 deaths were covid related. 92% of these covid related deaths had at least three underlying health conditions. The median age of covid related deaths was 81 years old for men, and 86 years old for women. Both are above our national average life span.

100,000 died of cancer. 32,000 died of heart disease. 30,000 died of Alzheimer's and dementia. 10,000 died of diabetes. Covid related deaths represent fewer than 1 per cent of the total deaths in Australia over the past 22 months.

The Queensland Parliament needs to show Queensland citizen, that to continue this "State of Emergency" is justified based on the Governments own data released. Although sad, 2,639 deaths over a 22-month period does not justify a State of Emergency, otherwise you are insulting the 100,000 who died of cancer. The 32,000 who died of heart disease. The 30,000 who died of Alzheimer's and dementia. And the 10,000 who died of diabetes. These deaths all warrant a State

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of Emergency if we based it on the number of deaths and threat to citizens health over the last 22 months that this pandemic-related State of Emergency has been in place.

The original Public Health Act 2005 allowed a maximum allowable extension of only 7 days at a time and asking Queenslanders to again approve an extension of emergency powers (especially by the maximum allowable limit of 6 months) must be extensively justified by empirical evidence and sound health advice, made available to public scrutiny, including a detailed risk-benefit analysis of the continuation of such powers.

The maximum allowable extension of emergency powers may have been necessary during the peak of the pandemic, however the conditions under which the original 'Covid-19 Emergency' was declared have substantially changed. The original Covid-19 variant presented a much greater mortality risk and risk of severe outcomes compared to the Omicron variant (BA.1). Furthermore, Queensland's Covid-19 ICU admissions and hospitalisations are decreasing and Queensland has recently opened its domestic borders, is accepting international travelers, is relaxing mask mandates and capacity limits and reviewing public health restrictions. Extending the expiring provisions by the maximum allowable amount under these conditions is scientifically unjustified and would be a violation of Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The original Public Health Act 2005 allowed a maximum allowable extension of only 7 days at a time, which has since been grossly extended without appropriate justification. Human rights and freedoms are expected to be impacted during a State of Emergency, but the extended use of the Public Health Act 2005 for the past 2 years is unprecedented and unreasonably impacting the unalienable rights of Queenslanders. Australia did not extend the State of Emergency for this long during the 1918 Influenza pandemic, despite the mortality and public health risk. Even the dictatorial Roman Empire could not declare a "State of Emergency" for longer than 6 months (even during war time) due to the implications on the rights and freedoms of citizens. Australia is a democracy and the use of this legislation has allowed the State Government to bypass the usual democratic process without just cause. Any further extensions of emergency powers must be heavily scrutinised.

The Health Minister must declare an end to the public health emergency as soon as he/she is satisfied it is no longer necessary to exercise powers under section 324 Public Health Act 2005, but the Health Minister has not clarified what specific conditions/parameters would satisfy this declaration. This is despite the drastic improvement of the health risks presented by the original 'Covid-19 emergency' and despite countries around the world starting to treat Covid-19 as an endemic disease like 'the flu'. Countries around the world are lifting all Covid related restrictions, despite the increase in number of covid cases being recorded on a daily basis – why? Because they no longer see Covid as a threat to human life, at least no more than the flu, cancer, diabetes, heart disease, alzheimers and dementia.

It's time to lift ALL "Covid-19 emergency" related vaccine mandates and restrictions. Support for this statement is in:

- the evidence from ABS data, relating to Covid deaths over the last 22 months of this State of Emergency
- the evidence from numerous studies around the world relating to vaccine efficiency,
- the evidence relating to recovery of illness from Covid-19 (regardless of vaccination status),
- the evidence that vaccine status does not affect transmission rates of this virus.
- the evidence coming out of countries ahead of us in the health journey of living with Covid-19 shows they are living with Covid with all Covid related restrictions lifted.

All of the above support that this can no longer be called a State of Emergency, and does not justify an extension to the Covid-19 Emergency.

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I ask that the committee request and review in detail the scientific literature and supporting evidence the Health Minister is relying on to justify a 6 month extension of the expiring provisions and what specific conditions in Queensland would satisfy a declaration of the end of the 'Covid-19 emergency' as defined by the Public Health Act 2005. The public release of this information is vital for government transparency, government oversight and to safeguard against potential abuse of the Public Health Act 2005.

Kind regards

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Signature

Ange Zelinski