

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

cssc@parliament.qld.gov.au

**RE: PUBLIC HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION (EXTENSION OF EXPIRING PROVISIONS)
AMENDMENT BILL 2022**

Good day to all Honourable members of the Committee,

I am writing this submission to the committee to address the concerns I have in the amendment bill introduced to the house on 22/02 by the Hon Yvette D'Ath MP to extend State of Emergency Powers through to 31 October 2022.

The Committee previously met to discuss the proposed Public Health and Other Legislation (Further Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2021 which was put forward by the Minister for Health whereby an extension of emergency powers was sought through to 30 Apr 2022.

Despite widespread reluctance from the community, as well as business & industry this was passed and emergency powers which were being enjoyed by ex Chief Health Officer Jeannette Young are now being realised by incumbent CHO Dr John Gerrard. Through these powers the CHO has the ability to determine how everyday people are to live their lives in our great state of Queensland, via his "public health orders".

Public health orders are not always necessarily based on science or fact-based evidence, but as we have seen with restrictions placed in Queensland and other states are done via opinion; either of the CHO, the premier or of a body of "experts". We have seen the science "change" over the course of this pandemic and there doesn't seem to be any level of accountability or admission of errors, as it's deemed a constantly evolving challenge.

Although I acknowledge the above point, government needs to also acknowledge that continually calling something an emergency does not necessarily make it so. Whilst QLD and Australia has been holding out on COVID spread, chasing an impossible task with a virus of zero transmission the rest of the world has been able to work through this in an effort to return to relatively normal life.

A key determination in the prime minister's re-opening plan for Australia as discussed and agreed upon by all state and territory leaders in your national cabinet meetings was 90% vaccination rate. This has been achieved, through choice or via coercion from mandates imposed under the CHO's emergency powers. As this goal has been met then the QLD state government should follow through and roll back all current restrictions.

Noted that masks are being removed in most public settings from Fri 04/03 1800 which is a good move. The mask rules have been a contentious point from the days of wear one when you leave the house to wearing one from the front door to your table in a restaurant. Going forward and without SOE powers mask mandates should not apply however if people choose to wear one for their own safety then that should be their own prerogative.

The vaccine mandate in effect from 17 December 2021 is another contentious issue and arguably the most controversial imposed to date. If we are following the science same as every other state/territory or nation state in the world then the notion of the vaccine mandates should have been nullified soonest transmission was identified between vaccinated individuals at the same viral load as unvaccinated.

Outdoor transmission has also been proven not to exist and yet sporting events and music festivals come under this policy. This therefore supports that the mandate is put in place either as a punishment or reward as yet again the "science" has not been followed, only a political decision guiding this public health order. Worth noting that LNP state such as NSW scaled back their application of vaccine passports however ALP states are still very much in support. This is definitely a point that won't be lost on voters both in the upcoming federal and state elections.

On the virus at present although Queensland sought "expert" modelling which indicated an absolute worst case scenario, this was never realised. To predict thousands of hospitals and ICU admissions / deaths and to then have something with the Omicron strain not even resembling a bad flu season, again the emergency aspect needs to be considered reviewed and some humble acceptance, short of an apology should be in order.

State of Emergency powers are exactly that – powers that should be scaled back accordingly with the extent of the emergency at present and I request the committee to do just that and not grant this extension of these powers via the amendment bill. If the state can host and individuals attend major sporting events, concerts and every form of recreational activity, then the answer lies there – the emergency is over.

In closing it is time that Queenslanders got back to "normal" life, and individuals again looked after and made their own health decisions. Time for public health order and all covid related restrictions to be removed. Time for due legal process to be followed. Time for the state of emergency to end.

Kind regards,
David Latham

