

Current as at 11.00am AEST on Friday 4 March 2022

Submission to the Community Support and Services Committee regarding the inquiry into the Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2022

Submission made by:

Name: Ms Sarah McDonough



Background of my submission

- I make my submission for the inquiry into the Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2022.
- I strongly oppose the Queensland Government's position to extend the state of emergency in Queensland. While it may have been necessary in January 2020 to invoke a state of emergency to manage COVID-19, I believe these laws are now simply being used as a rationale for suspending Queenslanders' rights and freedoms.

COVID-19 case numbers, restrictions, and reporting

- From a public standpoint there doesn't appear to be sufficient evidence to suggest a state of emergency needs to continue in Queensland.
- Government press conferences and daily media reporting of COVID-19 has stalled, and [Australian case numbers](#) have been returning to manageable levels right across the country. Queensland is beginning to 'live' with COVID-19.
- In Queensland, [case numbers](#) continue to fall (see figure 1 below) and most [restrictions](#) have been lifted – suggesting we are not currently living in a state of emergency when it comes to COVID-19.

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Covid cases announced daily in Queensland

Showing the number of cases announced daily by testing type and the trend of total cases as a 7-day rolling average. Testing criteria (1) changed significantly on 5 January 2022. Cases after this point should be considered an underestimate and may contain duplicates from RAT reporting Last updated 13 February 2022.

● PCR ● RAT — Trend

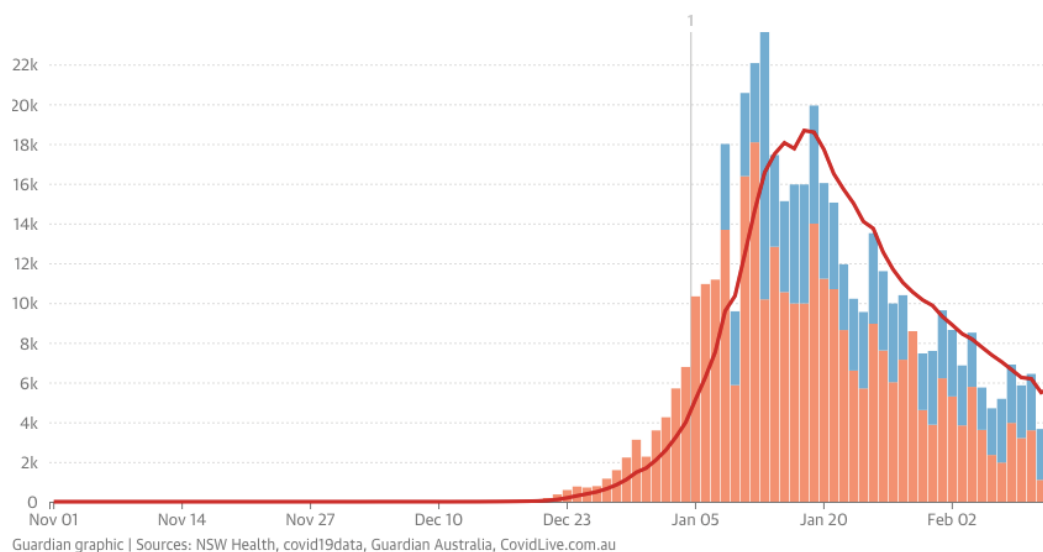


Figure 1: Covid cases announced daily in Queensland, as compiled by the Guardian (as at 04/03/2022)

Global response as COVID-19 moves from pandemic to endemic

- As COVID-19 moves from pandemic to endemic, countries around the world turn their focus to making a social and economic recovery.
- Countries such as [Italy](#), [Israel](#), Spain have either already ended states of emergency or will do so by the end of March 2022, with other European countries like Denmark and Sweden removing restrictions. The [United Kingdom](#) will remove its state of emergency by 31 March, and the [US Senate](#) is moving to end the state of emergency in the United States of America.

Abuse of power under state of emergency declarations

- Unfortunately, there is also evidence (as outlined in this [BCC article](#)) that with emergency powers, states can invoke exceptional actions during a crisis to deviate away from existing laws. We've seen this recently in Canada with the [abuse of the provisions of emergency acts](#) to impose targeted, draconian restrictions upon everyday citizens, who were peacefully exercising their democratic right to protest.
- With so many other countries around the world removing similar draconian powers, it is now time for Australia, and Queensland specifically, to follow suit.

My rights and freedoms as an Australian citizen

- My rights and freedoms as an Australian citizen and permanent resident of Queensland have already been suspended for approximately two years under the current orders.
- In terms of public administration, two years is a reasonable amount of time for both the Australian and Queensland Governments to create structure and

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process around dealing with COVID-19. The evidence I've outlined above and the current restrictions and measures in place, do not indicate that it is necessary for Queensland to remain in a state of emergency, indefinitely.

Closing statement

- I ask you not to extend these powers beyond April 2022 as outlined in this bill, and ask you to consider requesting that the Queensland Government resubmit for consideration, if and when a future state of emergency becomes necessary.
- Also, where the Queensland Government may ask to extend the state of emergency in Queensland in future, I implore the Community Support and Services Committee to demand detailed evidence to outline why an ongoing state of emergency is necessary and appropriate.

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission.

Kind regards,

Sarah McDonough