

Submission regarding the Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2022

Email: cssc@parliament.qld.gov.au

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

4 March 2022

Dear Community and Support Services Committee Secretary,

I wish to thank the Community Support and Services Committee for the opportunity to present a submission regarding the **Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2022** (the Bill). However, I do express my concern regarding the very short timeframe given for people to write submissions. The Bill was tabled on **22 February** and had to be made **urgent** for this reason. Your Committee's report is due on 25 March and the current public health emergency **expires on 26 March**. Furthermore, the Government has **three months** to respond to any recommendations from your Committee.

My name is Judith Ann Hunter. [REDACTED]

I hereby wish to declare my **opposition to any further extension of the public health emergency in Queensland** and my **opposition to this Bill**.

The **public health emergency**, first declared on 29 January 2020, has already been extended several times, the most recent extension being on 2 December 2021. It is due to expire at 11.59pm on 26 March 2022. To combat the COVID-19 pandemic, extraordinary powers were granted to the Chief Health Officer, in order to regulate people's behaviour to protect the public: restricting contact between persons; forcing people into isolation; banning public gatherings; and any other action considered necessary to protect public health. I believe it is time to end those extraordinary powers because **there is no longer a public health emergency in Queensland**, evidenced by the low numbers of hospitalisations and deaths.

I believe this proposed extension of public emergency is unwarranted because:

- ❖ **Most Queenslanders now want to 'get on with living with COVID-19'** - for over two years, Queenslanders on the whole have complied with the wide-reaching rules of contact tracing requirements, mask mandates, vaccination requirements, restrictions on gatherings and so on. I am grateful that mask mandates are being lifted later today, because I believe the prolonged mandates of mask wearing by healthy people is in fact detrimental to their health, but there are other restrictions that have continued for far too long;

- ❖ **Queenslanders need the right of choice restored** - the deprivation of rights and liberties of people needs to end; the segregation caused by the vaccine mandates – for the vaccinated to be able to work, to go about their everyday lives, to connect with family and friends, to access health services, and for the unvaccinated not be able to do those things – has been enormously damaging; even though there is a high rate of vaccination in Queensland, it has not stopped the spread of the virus; at the same time, much **fear** has been generated unnecessarily about the Omicron variant; also, while there has been reporting about COVID-19 cases and deaths, there has not been reporting about **adverse reactions to the vaccines**. Why has this information been hidden?
- ❖ **The protection of those who are vulnerable**, particularly the elderly, does not, in my opinion, require or validate the extension of the public health emergency;
- ❖ **Australia now needs consistent rules between the states and territories** – the inconsistencies have caused confusion, distress and unwarranted, unnecessary separation of families and loved ones.
- ❖ **The discrimination and the restriction of rights and liberties** caused by the exercise of these emergency powers need to end now. The ‘peak’ of the Omicron wave has now passed. Countries where the pandemic was much more widespread and deadly are dropping restrictions and mandates. I believe it is now time to follow their lead.
- ❖ The **recent floods** in Queensland and New South Wales have demonstrated the need for our people to work together and support one another, rather than being fearful and isolated. It is time to work towards rebuilding our unity and identity as a nation.

If the Health Minister or the Chief Health Officer are unable to provide valid justification that the benefits of prolonging the public health emergency significantly outweigh the serious adverse effects, and if they are unable to provide evidence to justify why there is still a need to have the power to: restrict the movement of people; require people to stay at or in a particular place; require people not to enter or stay at a particular place; restrict contact between persons, they are **obligated to declare the end of the 'public health emergency'**. I believe that that time is well and truly **now**.

I urge your Committee to make strong recommendations to reject this Bill and enable the restoration of valued freedoms to the people of Queensland.

Thank you for your consideration of my submission and for your deliberations regarding this Bill and its implications.

Yours faithfully,
Judy Hunter

