

Economics and Governance Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000
egc@parliament.qld.gov.au

07 July 2021

Dear Economic and Governance Committee Members,

**Submission relating to: Public Health and Other Legislation
(Further Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2021**

I am very concerned about the *Public Health and Other Legislation (Further Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Act 2021*; regarding both the inclusions of the Amendment and the continuation of Emergency Response Acts as they relate to Covid-19. I am no lawyer, and cannot use legalise to describe the sections of the Act that cause the greatest alarm, but I am a concerned individual that believes that the Queensland Government must cease the perpetuation of restrictions on Queenslanders by-way of their Covid-19 Emergency Response. I request that the Economics and Governance Committee denies any requests made by the Amendment to extend the applicability of the stated Emergency Response Acts as they relate to Covid-19; and I request that the Committee endorses the cessation of the Emergency Response Acts as they relate to Covid-19.

1. Queensland's greatest threat:

It is very apparent that the most significant threat being faced by Queenslanders, Queensland and its communities at present, and the last eighteen months hence, does not relate to the Covid-19 virus but is the direct consequence of the Queensland Government's over-reaching, and increasingly unjustifiable Emergency Response to Covid-19.

2. In relation to the Covid-19 threat:

Yes, people who have Covid-19 may feel unwell; may lose time at work; may, in rare more serious cases, require hospitalisation; and, in rarer cases, may pass away. Although typically in these cases, due to the compounding and complicating effect of co-morbidities. These circumstances are not unlike the seasonal flu and other illnesses that frequently pass through our community, but generally have little impact on the population as a whole.

Case numbers relating to Covid-19 are extremely low, comprising a very small percentage of the population. Hospitalisations arising from these cases is also extremely low, a very small percentage of the case numbers; and deaths with Covid-19 – not from Covid-19, but *with* Covid-19 – are rarer still: an even smaller percentage of case numbers.

Using the Queensland Government's own statistics: of the 1,714 Covid-19 cases there have been 1,641 recoveries and seven deaths, with 47 active cases and some additional cases still to be determined¹. The possibility of a death being associated with a case of Covid-19 is 0.4%. The incidence of Covid-19 cases,

¹ Data retrieved 06 July 2021; <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19/current-status/statistics#caveat-active>

compared to Queensland's population of 5,194,900² is 0.03% with the chance of Covid-19-associated death being 0.00013%. It is also worth noting that many of these reported cases relate to cases for persons returning from overseas, not actually cases from Queensland's population.

In the initial few months of Covid-19's emergence, the focus was on deaths and hospitalisations associated with Covid-19. Now, case numbers are being used with little acknowledgement of the hospitalisations or deaths associated with Covid-19, due to these being so rare: Queensland currently accounts for 38 cases being in hospital³ (0.00073% of its population), and in total accounts for seven deaths. For Australia: only one death have been associated with Covid-19 in 2021. A 'case' of Covid-19 effectively describes someone who has more than a 98% chance of recovering from the illness; someone who may present few, if any, symptoms at all and may even be deemed 'asymptomatic'. Rarely do Covid-19 cases translate into hospitalisations and rarer still into deaths.

Comparatively:

- For the period 1 January 2018-31 December 2018: Queensland had 15,685 notifications of influenza, with 1,715 reported hospitalisations (in public hospitals)⁴, almost 11% of the notifications.
- For the period 31 December 2018-13 October 2019: Queensland had 66,135 notifications of influenza with about 19.4% positive tests⁵; effectively 12,830 "cases" (to use terms comparative to Covid-19). Reported hospitalisations (in public hospitals) was 3,012 or put another way: 23% of the reported case numbers.

These numbers alone far surpass the numbers for Covid-19: notifications of influenza in the 12 months of 2018 are more than nine times (9x) greater; and "case numbers" of influenza in the 10½ months in 2019 are almost 7.5 times greater than the Covid-19 case numbers of the past eighteen months. Considering this, it is interesting that the Queensland Government has not felt it necessary to impose any Emergency Response Acts, perpetuate any lockdowns, effect restrictions, mandate mask-wearing, or implement QR code-check-ins as a response to influenza in the community.

3. In relation to the threat of the Queensland Government's Covid-19 Emergency Response:

The aforementioned Covid-19 threats are minimal and greatly overshadowed by the more serious, life-threatening, life-altering consequences directly resulting from the Queensland Government's Emergency Response to Covid-19.

In my experience alone:

- I have seen dozens of small businesses close in my area and be affected by the lockdowns and restrictions – every new lockdown resulted in another 3-4 or more closures.
- I have family and friends who have not been able to visit or support loved ones; have not been able to attend to essential medical appointments, and have not been able to engage in activities that provide physical and mental wellbeing.
- I have family and friends who have (fortunately) not lost their jobs but have been forced to into reduced hours of work; pay cuts; forcible use of leave; and other such disadvantages to their financial stability and wellbeing.

² Population as at 31 Dec 2020. Data retrieved 06 July 2021;

<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/national-state-and-territory-population/latest-release>

³ Data retrieved 06 July 2021; <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19/current-status/statistics#caveat-active>

⁴ Data retrieved 07 July 2021; Statewide Influenza Surveillance Report, Reporting Period: 1 January to 31 December 2018

⁵ Data retrieved 07 July 2021; Statewide Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report, Reporting Period: ISO weeks 1–41 (31 December 2018 to 13 October 2019)

- My own work has been affected: I have not been able to travel interstate for work and on occasions that I have, the time away for work (more than once) become three times longer due to the restrictions in effect.

None of these are isolated incidences and I do not believe I have been “specially” affected. I believe these are common experiences that would be shared by most Queenslanders as a result of the Government’s Emergency Response to Covid-19.

Of the limited data that is already available, the negative impact – and disastrous side-effects – of the Emergency Response are starting to show:

- The number of persons employed in Queensland declined between February and June in 2020 and again in late 2020⁶ – periods that were predominately affected by lockdowns imposed under the Covid-19-related Emergency Responses.
- Average weekly earnings in the private sector were declining by the end of last year (2020)⁷. Though, interestingly, the average weekly earnings of those in the public sector – which includes those who are responsible for the Covid-19-related Emergency Responses – continued to increase. Those in the public sector do not appear to share the same financial disadvantage that has been imposed on the private sector by lockdowns and restrictions. Are politicians and public servants truly “in this together” with their private sector counterparts?
- Similarly, retail turnover was directly affected by the lockdowns and restrictions imposed on Queenslanders and visitors to the state. There were significant downturns: almost 17% in April 2020 following initial lockdowns and more than 21% in January 2021 following lockdowns and restrictions during the Christmas/New Year’s period.⁸
- Of significant concern is that Queensland experienced its highest recorded number of sexual assault victims during 2020 with most (70%) occurring at a residential location. More than 86% of the victims were female and 47% were aged under 15 years; 35% of these incidents were recorded as family and domestic violence.⁹ The increased time spent at home due to lockdowns meant increased opportunity for these assaults; no doubt fuelled by the challenges of close-proximity living, inability to escape the environment, fraying tensions, and the affected mental and emotional wellbeing of individuals .

These are but a few examples of the direct implications of the Covid-19 Emergency Response on Queenslanders; as more data becomes available I have no doubt that it will paint an even more concerning picture.

4. Covid-19 is NOT Queensland’s biggest threat:

In effect, Covid-19 is NOT the biggest threat being faced by Queenslanders, Queensland or its communities. The biggest threat to Queensland is the unjustified perpetuation of Emergency Response Acts and similar provisions that are being ‘kept alive’ by the illusion of a Covid-19 ‘emergency’. Every day of this ‘emergency’ has claimed victims of the Covid-19 Emergency Response. Every day the number of victims grow and every day that the Emergency Response continues to be perpetuated the number of victims will continue to grow. For many Queenslanders – those who have lost family members, businesses, jobs, opportunities, houses, assets, health, and mental wellbeing – there may be no recovery from their tragic

⁶ 6202.0 Labour Force, Australia Table 6. Labour force status by Sex, Queensland - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and

⁷ Data retrieved 06 July 2021; data released 25 February 2021; <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/earnings-and-work-hours/average-weekly-earnings-australia/latest-release#state-and-territory-earnings>

⁸ Data retrieved 06 July 2021; 8501.0 Retail Trade, Australia TABLE 4. Retail Turnover, By State - Percentage change from previous month

⁹ Data retrieved 06 July 2021; <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/recorded-crime-victims/2020>

losses. The only real emergency here is the emergency that the Queensland Government is perpetuating upon its own people – the very people that politicians and public servants should be helping, supporting and “building” in a positive, effective, and productive manner.

It is now time for Queensland to learn to ‘live’ with Covid-19 and start managing the implications of Covid-19 as it would the seasonal flu or some such other illness. This needs to happen whilst Queensland and Queenslanders still have capacities – economically, physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially – to recover and rebuild lives worth living, in a state that is worth living in (or visiting).

Further, Queensland’s Deputy Premier has recently indicated that the use of masks, testing and QR check-in could result in the latest lockdowns being the last such lockdowns. However, this is contrary to the Queensland Government’s pursuit of extending its powers under the Emergency Response – powers that generally translate into lockdowns and restrictions upon the community. Suggesting that the Government has no intent or desire for the latest lockdowns to be the last. It also suggests that these will occur regardless of the community’s compliance with mask, testing, and check-in requirements; because if this compliance truly made a difference, then the Government has no need to be considering long-term extensions of Covid-19 Emergency Response Acts, as they relate to the current circumstances in Queensland.

5. *My Request to the Committee*

Let me again reiterate my deep concerns about the proposed amendments of this Bill – I implore the Economics and Governance Committee to use sense and perform their duty to Queensland and Queenslanders, by denying any requests to extend Emergency Response Acts as they relate to Covid-19. Additionally, I request that the Committee endorses the cessation of the Emergency Response Acts as they relate to Covid-19.

Yours Faithfully,



Sarah Manning

