

**TO: THE ECONOMICS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

**RE: PUBLIC HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION (FURTHER EXTENSION OF EXPIRING PROVISIONS) AMENDMENT BILL 2021**

**SUBMITTED BY: BRONWYN WALKER**

**DATE: 7 JULY, 2021**

It has come to my attention that the Queensland Government is considering extending its emergency powers to allow further restrictions because of concern about the spread of the COVID-19 virus in the community.

I am forwarding this submission because of my concern about the negative effects of these restrictions on the well-being – both in health and economic stability – of Queenslanders, and indeed all Australians.

I was a resident of Queensland for most of my life and am deeply upset to see the outcome of lockdowns and other actions inhibiting the usual behaviour of residents of the state. Lockdowns are known to have a negative impact on mental health and the ability to have regular medical checks and treatments, as well as business.

It could be claimed that as I am no longer a Queensland resident, the decisions of the Queensland Government are not my business, but as a parent of a son still living in Queensland, the various lockdowns that have occurred make travel to visit him almost impossible. Further, for him to visit us is fraught with difficulty because he may be required to go into quarantine on his return. (That is exactly what happened last week because he had visited his fiancée in New South Wales.) Requirements such as these are damaging to businesses when a staff member returns from holiday outside Queensland and is then unable to return to work.

The restrictions are also having a significant negative impact on tourism in Queensland as many residents of southern states holiday in Queensland. Unfortunately, they are all learning the hard way – don't book holidays to Queensland because they will most likely need to be cancelled. As I write this, I personally know TWO (2) families who have just cancelled holiday plans in the Sunshine Coast.

Initially, both the Federal and State Governments in Australia were focussed on “flattening the curve” to ensure that hospitals could cope with any influx of patients suffering from COVID-19. Now, this focus seems to have changed to an elimination strategy. Other countries, including Britain and Singapore, have accepted that they will have to “live with the virus” in the future and they are moving on with life.

Past pandemics, such as Avian or Bird Flu, Swine Flu, etc, have remained in the community, and indeed, Avian/Bird Flu was simply renamed to “Influenza A”. The symptoms of that particular flu are significantly worse than the recent variants of COVID-19, and while the

latter may be considered more “infectious”, I believe it will be found to be as dangerous as the common cold or a medium flu.

At no stage were any areas of Australia closed down or restricted for these previous pandemics, although I had a close family member who was in an induced coma in Intensive Care for four (4) months with Swine Flu, which was considered very deadly. Medical authorities will tell you that the more infectious a virus is, the less deadly it is, and that was the case with Swine Flu and Ebola. We are now seeing that while the COVID-19 variants are apparently infectious, few people are suffering severe symptoms. In fact, the symptoms listed now are far less intense or numerous than Influenza A.

I have to question why there are now restrictions of any kind, taking into account these facts. Clearly, the measures that have been taken should now cease as they are not proportionate with the “threat” from COVID-19.

It could be argued that the vaccines are actually working because the latest outbreak in Summit Care, the aged care home in New South Wales, where the residents had been vaccinated, shows that they have not developed symptoms or only very minor ones. Based on that experience, there is not even a need for the aged care workers to be compulsorily vaccinated, as the residents appear to be “protected” from severe symptoms.

From the early onset of COVID-19 in the community, the vulnerable should have been protected, and the rest of the population allowed to get on with life. I appreciate that any loss of life is a very sad event, and I personally lost my parents in a nursing home to conditions that are common in the elderly. That was to be expected because of their age.

I believe we have got to a point in Australia where it is almost “unacceptable” for people to die, even in their 80’s and 90’s, which is completely ridiculous. Many of these elderly people would far rather have their relatives visit them – and risk dying from COVID-19 – instead of being locked away in what is virtually solitary confinement. (This situation is not merely limited to aged care facilities, but is also the case where elderly people may be living alone, and their visitors are restricted, either in number or variety.)

It is time for all governments, including Queensland, to accept that illnesses are a part of life and have the courage to move on, rather than cowering in our homes or hiding behind useless masks. I have struggled with the decisions of our governments and believe that the Queensland Government, and indeed all Australian Governments, are capable of better.

Respectfully submitted

Bronwyn Walker

