

Health and Environment Committee

From: Gillian Lyons [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 12 January 2021 4:15 PM
To: Health and Environment Committee
Subject: Submission: Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Divisions) Amendment Bill 2020

Categories: Submission

I make the following submission in respect of the proposed Bill:

At the time that the original legislation was passed, Queensland had limited information about the likely global impact of the pandemic and its effect on Australia. General, wide-ranging powers was probably appropriate at that time. However, Australia has had much success in containment of the coronavirus such that a further extension is unnecessary, and undesirable for the reasons set out below.

First, I disagree with unelected government officials having so much power over the everyday rights and actions of ordinary Queenslanders. Medical personnel will necessarily only focus on the medical aspects without sufficient balance against civil rights, the economy and the effect on individuals and businesses. If you ask a medical person "what's the best way to control a pandemic?", their answer will always be Shelter in Place, which is also the last resort in any crisis. Therefore, these power should not rest in the hands of unelected bureaucrats with safe jobs simply because they have medical qualifications, but rather with someone who is able to see the whole picture and apply appropriate checks and balances and provide agile, responsive solutions.

Secondly, surely this extension can no longer be justified in the face of the development of effective vaccines and the proposed rollout in Australia within the next month?

Thirdly, is the current advice actually the correct approach? All recent cases in Australia have originated overseas. As a country, we need to move our focus away from domestic control and onto or potential sources of international infections, whether that be crew of bulk and container vessels, freight flights, international flights, returning Australians, private vessels and those who have contact with any of them, including all of the staff of quarantine hotels, security, cleaning, ground transportation, catering services, baggage and freight handlers, and so on. We don't hear the doctors giving any suggestions like to triple or quadruple the pay of all of these employees (given the amount of money that is being spent on other stimulus packages and given how much lockdowns cost the economy) and create some sort of FIFO arrangement whereby such personnel are themselves quarantined in something like 2 to 4 week shifts, rather than returning to the community every day, or put some other personal and public protections in place.

We cannot continue to allow our senior leaders to hide behind medical advice, which usually means doing the same thing over and over. Instead we need our bureaucrats and politicians to show genuine leadership and come up with new ways in which to prevent constant re-infection of innocent Queenslanders from overseas. The emergency legislation has had its time and its use and should not be extended.

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