

Committee Secretary

Health & Environment Committee

Parliament House

Queensland

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Extension of Powers bestowed on the Chief Health Officer of Queensland

I read in the Courier Mail and the Townsville Bulletin that submissions are sought in regards to extending the powers of the Chief Health Officer until September of this year.

I have been following closely over the past twelve months of the Covid-19 pandemic. I am of the opinion that careful consideration must be made as to whether the sweeping powers of the unelected Chief Health Officer should be extended until the end of September, 2021. I feel that the Government members have abrogated their responsibilities and passed them onto the CHO.

I will acknowledge that the Covid-19 pandemic has not had a major impact (health wise) on Queensland and its constituents, compared with other parts of Australia and around the world but financially, it's had a catastrophic effect and is ongoing. Decisions made were made for the whole of Queensland but there were regional parts that questioned why they were included.

I question the wisdom displayed with just the three following examples from the Chief Health Officer.

1. Early in the pandemic schools were closed.
REASON: This will ensure that the people of Queensland will take the matter seriously even though the virus did not affect children. Families were grossly inconvenienced and children's education was affected.
2. Exemptions to enter Queensland when the border was closed were given to celebrities and sports people.
REASON: These people were allowed in because they bring money into the state.
3. In the recent locked down of the greater Brisbane area drivers of vehicles (even if they were alone) were required to wear a mask.
REASON: People will get used to putting on a mask as they head outdoors.

I wonder if Government members were comfortable and in agreement with those decisions made by the CHO. After all, the Government was required to enforce these decisions.

Parliamentarians are elected to govern our state and their decisions should be made to benefit all Queenslanders. In their deliberations, the Government members have access to many consultants (at great expense) before making decisions affecting legislation. I put the Chief health Officer in the category of a consultant to provide sage advice for the Government to deliberate and finally legislate- not an unelected person. These decisions need to be seen as the Government making the decision – as it should be.

Government must accept the decision and be held responsible for such decisions.

It is highly preferable that the information (on which decisions are made) proffered by the Chief Health Officer should be made public so that the people of Queensland will have a better understanding of why decisions are made.

Media conferences seemed farcical when we had a procession of the Premier, the Chief health Officer and then the Health Minister stepping up to the podium to deliver the same information. Surely we only need the one message. If the decisions are owned by the Government then we would only need the Premier or Health Minister passing on the information. The one message should be prefaced with, "It is the decision of the Queensland Government" – not the Chief Medical Officer.

The Government of Queensland must accept responsibility and own the decisions made. Do not pass this responsibility on to an unelected member.

In conclusion, I would recommend that extraordinary powers of the Chief Health Officer of Queensland bestowed during the pandemic, **not** be extended.

Yours faithfully

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