




Speech By  
**David Janetzki**

**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH**

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Record of Proceedings, 18 March 2020

**PUBLIC HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION (PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY)  
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr JANETZKI** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (8.45 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Public Health and Other Legislation (Public Health Emergency) Amendment Bill 2020. I will make a couple of different contributions tonight. I will speak briefly to the particular amendments that affect my portfolio, but then also raise a number of other issues of concern both across the state and locally in my electorate.

The amendments in relation to the bill facing the House tonight relate to 11 acts that sit in this House. With one hour's notice to amend the Electoral Act 1992—we should be thankful to get an hour, because we normally only get 18 minutes. To have the full hour, it is a tripling of the normal time we get before those opposite sneak through amendments that fundamentally change the electoral system in Queensland.

I come back to the provisions in relation to the Electoral Act. I note section 392A relates to COVID-19 and the amendments are limited to the involvement of the public health emergency that we currently face in Queensland. The changes in section 392D that relate to the Governor or Speaker being able to postpone a polling day are appropriate in the circumstances. While I am speaking in relation to the Governor, I note that the proposed changes to the Executive Council technology and the way that Executive Council meet is appropriate in the circumstances, too. It may be opportune, given the uncharted waters that we are currently in across Queensland, that more consideration be given to the way generally this House conducts its affairs and whether more can be done electronically into the future.

Sections 392G and 392H relate to methods of voting. These are significant and serious amendments to the Electoral Act, especially so when you consider that we are already voting. The two by-elections in question are the Currumbin by-election and the Bundamba by-election. Notwithstanding the seriousness of the public health emergency that we face, it is unprecedented to be changing the methods by which our citizens can vote in the middle of an electoral battle underway right now in Queensland. They are very significant changes.

It raises questions, when you start making such significant changes in the middle of a ballot, whether ECQ can keep up with the necessary resources. Obviously, with the increase in pre-poll voting hours, we need to make sure the ECQ is properly resourced with people to assist voters as they come into the booths. I note the local government minister this morning was talking about additional hours between 9 and 11 for the aged and the vulnerable, and the additional staff that will be present for those periods. I would hope that we would have additional staffing through pre-polling as much as humanly possible to support people as they come into the polling booths.

My concerns also relate to the technology and the integrity of the technology. If more people are phone voting then it is extremely important that there is integrity around the systems where people are voting with assistance or over the telephone.

I turn to the amendment of section 392I. They are broad powers which raise questions. This is the how-to-vote card provision. In a public health emergency all options need to be on the table. This is a fundamental change to the way we have conducted elections. It does raise questions around a limitation on freedom of political communication and the way in which candidates and those supporting candidates can communicate a message freely and persuasively to voters as they are entering the polling booth or at any other time. I also note that there is some lack of certainty around the question of public interest. Given the time I have had to read this bill, I believe that this has not been linked to a particular advice or public health warning, but I accept that in the circumstances these things will be necessary.

The final question I have in relation to the provisions amending the Electoral Act is around the amendment to section 392J which talks about the regulation and section expiring after one year of its commencement. Given that the next Queensland election is set down for 31 October, I wonder whether the Attorney-General could clarify why that has been given an expiry of one year rather than up until 31 October.

There is an issue that I would like to bring to the attention of the House tonight which arises from the Prime Minister's address this morning. He talked about the limitations on aged care throughout Australia. It is noteworthy that the provision announced by the Prime Minister this morning does not relate to the retirement villages sector. The Prime Minister foreshadowed that, without the states and territories intervening in respect of retirement villages, operators may have no power to enforce social distancing and other health and safety provisions. I tonight table an excerpt from the Prime Minister's address and also an email from Minter Ellison where they raise those questions and in particular state that in the absence of enabling legislation or regulation by the state government, retirement village operators are effectively limited to requesting support from residents to introduce the restrictions and tighter controls required to limit the spread of the virus. I would be interested to hear the government's response to that.

*Tabled paper:* Email, dated 18 March 2019, from a Partner, Minter Ellison, Mr Robin Lyons, to the member for Burleigh, Mr Michael Hart MP, titled 'Retirement villages—COVID-19 response [444](#).

In the time remaining, I would like to turn briefly to the financial aspects of this bill. In my previous working life I worked for a bank during the global financial crisis. In my last days in London before returning home I saw the first bank run in the United Kingdom in 150 years which brought down Northern Rock. Upon returning to Australia I started working for a bank. That was initially the credit crunch in London. It ended up being the global financial crisis when I returned to work for Heritage Bank in Australia.

One thing we learnt from the global financial crisis—the advice taken up by a Labor federal government—was to go hard, go early, go households. My concern about what is facing the House tonight is that economically the bill does not go hard enough nor far enough. That is why the amendments, foreshadowed by the shadow Treasurer and which I now table, are so important.

*Tabled paper:* Public Health and Other Legislation (Public Health Emergency) Amendment Bill 2020, Mr Tim Mander's amendments [445](#).

*Tabled paper:* Public Health and Other Legislation (Public Health Emergency) Amendment Bill 2020, explanatory notes to Mr Tim Mander's amendments [446](#).

*Table paper:* Public Health and Other Legislation (Public Health Emergency) Amendment Bill 2020, statement of compatibility with human rights contained in Mr Tim Mander's amendments [447](#).

Those amendments would set down a true economic road map to get through this. What we have seen at the moment, with the loans on offer and the payroll tax deferral, does not go far enough. The amendments talk about increased trading hours. They talk about a true waiver of payroll tax and not just the deferral of it so that businesses go broke in six months. It is about helping them today.

I said earlier that I had an hour to review this bill. I really had only 15 or 20 minutes because I spent the first 40 or 45 minutes after the Clerk sent us this bill talking to small business operators, chambers of commerce and TSBE in my electorate and across Toowoomba. I spoke to businesses such as Gabbinbar Homestead and GC Event Hire. I spoke to the franchise owner of a number of McDonald's stores in Toowoomba. In a city of 105,000 people he employs 600 people. They are crying out for genuine reform and genuine economic support—not payroll tax deferrals but payroll tax waivers.

I have spoken to Clubs Queensland. I have spoken with Martin Taylor, the CEO of Club Glenvale, tonight. I have spoken with Bernie Hogan of the QHA. Everybody is supportive of the health measures. We are going to see mass unemployment if the government does not step in and provide true stimulus—waive payroll tax, forgive licence fees and place gambling tax moratoriums on clubs and pubs. All options need to be on the table because at the moment this economic stimulus just does not go far enough.