




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Coronavirus; Domestic and Family Violence; Lockhart River, Plane Crash

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (12.58 pm): Queensland is facing an emergency unlike anything our generation has faced before. Queenslanders are used to facing natural disasters such as cyclones, floods and bushfires, but the threat we face today is very different and the danger is far greater. The coronavirus pandemic is the biggest public health crisis to affect Queensland in more than a century. We have already seen the damage it has inflicted in Asia and Europe, and we are still in the very early stages of the outbreak. In today's world, there is no chance that we can seal ourselves off from other countries and escape contact with the virus.

There is no way for Queenslanders to avoid the coronavirus pandemic. However, we can take steps to control how quickly and how far this disease spreads. Sadly, it is inevitable that lives will be lost in Queensland, but if we respond correctly many more lives can be saved. That is why it is essential that Queenslanders follow the official advice issued by both federal and state governments and their agencies. That advice is produced by the best health and scientific advice and experts in Australia. I ask Queenslanders not to listen to rumours on social media. Get your advice from official sources and stick to it.

All of us, each and every one of us, must take responsibility for ourselves and for each other. We must also take responsibility for our communities. There will be people in at-risk groups, particularly the elderly, who will be frightened and wondering how they will cope. I ask Queenslanders to check on your neighbours and let them know you are there to help.

We all must be calm, considerate and compassionate at this time, but that does not mean we should stop asking questions. The opposition supports the measures that the state government has implemented so far. If questions need to be asked, we will ask them.

The LNP has expressed concerns about Queensland Health for many years. There has been a steady deterioration in the performance in the Queensland health system. We have seen emergency departments at bursting point, a surge in ambulance ramping, and waiting lists for surgery growing longer and longer. I know that our frontline staff—everyone from our cleaners and the cooks to the doctors, the nurses and the paramedics—will do all they can in the coming months, but there is no doubt that Queensland Health is not as prepared as it should be.

Queensland's economy is also weaker than it ought to be. We do not know how damaging this pandemic will be for our businesses. If anyone thinks the economy will be back to normal in a few weeks time they are wrong. It may be many months before our economy starts functioning normally. In the meantime, many sectors of the economy will be damaged. Our unemployment rate was already the worst in the nation before the coronavirus pandemic. Now tens of thousands of jobs are in jeopardy. Urgent action is needed to help our economy through this crisis.

At the start of February the state LNP led the call for support for our tourism sector, including interest-free loans. It is clear now that much more help is needed. In the last few days the LNP has outlined a range of measures to support the economy and to save local jobs. Firstly, the payroll tax threshold should be lifted from \$1.3 million to \$6.5 million for six months. This would give an urgently needed tax break to 15,000 small and medium sized businesses. The Palaszczuk government's decision to defer payroll tax is simply postponing the pain for our small and medium local businesses.

Secondly, the state government should cut its payment time to 20 days. Reducing the time it takes to pay businesses will improve cash flow and will save those local jobs. Thirdly, \$500 million should be released right now for road maintenance projects. Queensland already has a staggering \$5.4 billion in backlog of road maintenance. Now is the time to get working on that backlog. Spending on roads will create new jobs that are desperately needed in regional Queensland. These measures need to be implemented immediately. Every day and every dollar matters right now. Our economy cannot wait for the state budget. We must act now to save Queensland jobs.

The coronavirus crisis is unprecedented and eventually it will pass. I want to briefly discuss another crisis we have faced for far longer than coronavirus and that is our domestic violence crisis. I did not know Hannah Clarke and her three beautiful children, Aaliyah, Lailah and Trey, but just looking at the photos of them together is enough to break your heart. Their murder on the streets of Brisbane was beyond evil. Our first instinct in the face of such a shocking crime is to flinch, to look away, because it is too hard to think about what happened to Hannah and her children, but we cannot look away. The scourge of domestic violence cannot continue. In the last five years more than 70 women have been murdered in acts of domestic or family violence in Queensland.

We have debated this issue for years and both the LNP and Labor have fully supported the *Not now, not ever* report, but *Not now, not ever* has not been enough. We need to take determined and effective action against the scourge of domestic violence. I have announced and developed a package of measures to address this problem. Firstly, the LNP is calling for a new coercive control offence, a specific domestic violence summary offence, and laws to empower police to issue domestic violence orders on the spot. Secondly, half a million dollars to fund the rollout of 200 personal safety devices to those at risk of domestic violence. Thirdly, the LNP is calling for an extra \$1 million for the Women's Legal Service, an extra \$1 million for other frontline not-for-profit agencies, and emergency assistance grants of up to \$2,000 to help victims flee from dangerous homes. Fourthly, we are seeking to introduce the toughest strangulation laws in the nation.

The LNP's plan is comprehensive and it has widespread support, but the LNP needs the support of this House for our plan to become a reality. I urge members on both sides of this House to back our plan because no Queenslander should have to live in fear. It is during times of crisis that domestic and family violence can escalate. I call on this House to please not turn your back at this stage in relation to a plan to stop the scourge of domestic violence in Queensland.

Finally, on behalf of the LNP, I would also like to pay tribute to the five victims of the Lockhart River plane crash. We do not know what exactly caused this tragedy, but we know that the men who were lost on that flight will be greatly missed by their families, friends and workmates. On behalf of the LNP, I praise and thank our emergency services workers for their work in the aftermath of this crash. Our thoughts and prayers are with everyone who has been affected by this tragedy.

The LNP stands with all of our communities whilst they are facing the unknown of the coronavirus pandemic. We again call for calm and compassion. Please ensure that we are looking out for each and every one of our neighbours, our friends and our family at this extremely stressful time.