




Speech By
Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

Record of Proceedings, 18 March 2020

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

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (8.26 pm): I rise tonight to speak on the Public Health and Other Legislation (Public Health Emergency) Amendment Bill 2020. I know that people are going through the full range of emotions at the moment. Tonight people are rightfully worried about their health, about their loved ones and about their jobs. I am just like everyone else. I have one daughter who works in retail and is currently in year 12, wondering what her year 12 is going to be like. I have one daughter who is in uni and works part-time. I have one daughter who is currently a student nurse. My elderly parents have just been on a cruise which should have been the trip of a lifetime. Like many other Queenslanders, my husband works away from home. We all must be calm, we must be compassionate, but most importantly we need to be considerate at this time.

The Palaszczuk Labor government is being anything but calm. This bill has panic written all over it. Labor is paving the way for the suspension of a democratic government in Queensland. No-one disputes the seriousness of the coronavirus, but Labor's plan is an extreme and undemocratic overreaction. Labor is forcing this bill through the House tonight because it does not want the scrutiny of the opposition. Those opposite do not want the questions asked. In a crisis like this it is more important than ever that governments remain transparent and accountable. In fact, that is what the people expect of their politicians. Coronavirus should not be used to cover up our democratic processes. Schools and workplaces are open; the parliament should stay open too. This morning the Prime Minister of Australia stood up and said essential workplaces—and he used the term 'parliament'—should remain open. The Premier of Queensland stood up in this parliament and she said she echoes the words of the Prime Minister. What a difference a couple of hours makes.

Labor is forcing this bill through in a couple of hours and not giving my members a chance to exercise their democratic right to speak on behalf of their constituents in this House because the Labor Party is out of its depth.

This bill does not go far enough. The danger is the health crisis. I know that the shadow Attorney-General will outline areas where this bill does not go far enough. Disappointingly, when the Minister for Main Roads over there is more interested in playing politics than in the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders, we know that we are at an all-time low in this House. The danger is the health crisis, but it will become an economic crisis because this bill does not go far enough. We on this side have been calling for the incompetent transport and main roads minister to bring forward the \$500 million worth of funding that could be spent in rural and regional Queensland to protect jobs.

Mr Minnikin interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order! Pause the clock. Acting Manager of Opposition Business, those interjections are not called for. You are interrupting the time of your own speaker. I urge you to keep your comments to yourself.

Mr Bailey interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, I urge you to cease your interjections or you will be warned.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: There we see the trivial ministers of the Palaszczuk government. They are the laughing-stock that the people of Queensland are meant to put their hope and faith in. We have heard industry groups laughing at the Palaszczuk government. The pleas of stakeholders such as the CCIQ and the National Retail Association are being ignored.

Mrs D'ATH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. While those on the opposite side have said that they want time to speak on the bill, my point of order is on relevance. They should speak to this bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am listening carefully and the member is being relevant.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Again I point out the issue with the state of the Queensland economy right now because of the coronavirus. The pleas of stakeholders such as the CCIQ and the National Retail Association have been ignored. Those groups represent employers—

Mr Powell interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Glass House, again, you are interrupting your own speaker. I call you to order.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is not an invitation for laughter and joking, members. I will be warning someone. Member for Glass House, I call you to order.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Stakeholders such as the CCIQ and the National Retail Association represent the casual workers who the jokers over there laugh about. They are the people who are losing their jobs right now because of the health crisis. They are the people who will be at the front line of the economic crisis that this state is facing because the Palaszczuk government is behind the eight ball. Every other state in this country is pulling out every single stop that they can to protect their workers, but the Palaszczuk government sits there and closes down parliament. They are rushing through a bill and denying democracy in this great state by not allowing opposition members the opportunity to speak on the bill.

The Attorney-General and the Minister for Main Roads can take as much offence as they like, but on behalf of each and every Queenslanders I stand here with the LNP team doing everything we can to force the Palaszczuk government into action. It is obvious when those opposite laugh and carry on that that is what they think of casual workers. That is what they think of the kids who have lost their retail jobs. That is what they think of the student nurses. That is what they think of the elderly of this state who will be struggling because of the inaction of the Palaszczuk government.

Two days ago I said that we would stand in a bipartisan way to assist the government to ensure that every amendment that needs to go through can go through. It is incumbent upon the Palaszczuk government to ensure that they are thinking about each and every Queenslanders. The bill before the House tonight has been rushed through. The opposition were given less than an hour to peruse it. Industry groups have been pleading with the opposition because the government has stopped listening. They have been pleading with us to look for amendments, which is exactly what we have done.

We know that as a proportion of this financial year's general government revenue, Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk is spending just 0.05 per cent on Queensland's coronavirus stimulus package. What are other states doing? New South Wales is spending \$2.3 billion; Western Australia, \$607 million; the Tasmanian government, which has an economy smaller than the Brisbane City Council—

Mrs D'ATH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. This is a health bill, not an appropriation bill—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members! There will be silence while I take the point of order.

Mrs D'ATH: There is no reference to other jurisdictions in the bill. The Leader of the Opposition has failed to address this bill at all in her speech. I ask that she be brought back to the bill.

Mr POWELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Under standing order 139, a speaker may address not only the long title of the bill but also references made in the explanatory notes and the committee report, if there is one—and in this case there is not a committee report because the bill is being rushed through. The explanatory notes include amendments to the Economic Development Act 2012. The comments being made by the Leader of the Opposition are incredibly relevant to the economic development of this state.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I will hear the point of order in silence, members. I will take some advice. The long title of the bill does refer to the Economic Development Act. I ask the member to remain relevant to the long title of the bill.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Additional broad powers for health workers and first responders are also required. I point the Attorney-General to that section of the bill. She may not have had as much time to look at it as others. I would like to challenge the minister on the amendments that limit the compensation scheme by making it clear that it does not apply to the COVID-19 emergency, especially given that this bill has been thrust upon parliament without adequate consultation. Sadly, even penalties for failing to comply with a requirement or direction made by an emergency officer or a detention order made by an emergency officer are required.

The biggest flaw in this bill by far is its anaemic response to the coronavirus. I say again that other states have stepped up. The Prime Minister of this country has stepped up. Why? Because they have a strong economy! Why can the Palaszczuk government not step up when Queenslanders need them to step up? It is because the state of Queensland has been driven into the ground by the Palaszczuk government! That is why the Palaszczuk government is unable to provide an economic response to the people of Queensland who are hurting right now. Even before the coronavirus outbreak, Queensland had the highest unemployment rate in the nation.

I say to each and every Queenslander that the state LNP team is right behind you and your communities. We are there to hear from you, to stand beside you and to offer you a way forward, because we know that the Palaszczuk government is clearly out of its depth and has spent the past five years of government squandering each and every one of this—

(Time expired)