



Speech By  
**James Lister**


**MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS**

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## ADJOURNMENT

### Coronavirus, Queensland Border Closure

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (10.15 pm): I rise to speak about the matter of the border closure in my electorate of Southern Downs. We would all be aware of the necessity to close the Queensland border and the fact that the work of the federal and state governments has resulted in a great slowing in the spread of coronavirus and the protection of life. I get that, as do my constituents in Southern Downs. However, the closure of the border we share with New South Wales has caused grave difficulties for many of my constituents.

It is not like Coolangatta, where there are services on both sides of the border. In my electorate of Southern Downs I have about 400 kilometres of country bordering New South Wales and many of the communities share a common interest with those on the other side. They may live just inside New South Wales and have to go to the doctor or shop in Queensland, or they may live in Queensland and find that the ambulance comes from New South Wales if they have a heart attack or a car crash.

The trouble with the border closures is that there have been concrete blocks placed across most of the existing crossings between New South Wales and Queensland. This has cut off residents on both sides from emergency services, from schools, from doctors, from the shops and also in many cases from farmland. They may own farming properties on both sides of the border. In one unfortunate case, a farmer contacted me to say that he has to do a 200-kilometre round trip with a low loader to take a tractor from one side of his property to the other. This is unacceptable.

I have written at length to the Premier. In fact, I have written to her twice on the matter of the border closures and I have received a dusty response simply restating the same statements that the government has already made. I have asked the state government to open more border crossings. I stress that I am not talking about expanding the category of people who are entitled to cross the border. I am just saying that no-one in this state should have to drive a 200-kilometre round trip to conduct their normal business when they are a prescribed person who is entitled to cross the border.

I would like to acknowledge my predecessor as the member for Southern Downs, the Hon. Lawrence Springborg, who is now the mayor of Goondiwindi Regional Council. He and his council have done a great job in working with the local police to organise a system for prescribed residents to cross at certain gates. I wish them well with that and I congratulate them on that initiative. It will not be a perfect solution. In the Southern Downs Regional Council area they have no such solution yet.

There are many people who are being gravely inconvenienced by this. I have proposed to the Premier that she get Australian Defence Force personnel to operate extra checkpoints. The offer was taken up to the extent that soldiers are now on checkpoints in the place of police. That is fine, but we still have no more checkpoints. People have a right to be able to access ambulances and their local community of interest, and they should not have to drive several hundred kilometres to do so.