




Speech By
Jarrold Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

Record of Proceedings, 18 March 2020

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

Declared Urgent; Allocation of Time Limit Order

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (7.34 pm): We have had the bill introduced now and we have had the minister move the motion for urgency, yet we have a day's sitting tomorrow. The reason the minister is declaring it urgent to be debated this evening and putting a two-hour time limit on it is that they do not want to come back to parliament tomorrow. That is the reality. We are not going to be here. They will suspend the House after this bill is debated tonight and we will not be back tomorrow. It is such an urgent but important matter that members of this House should be able to speak on it.

Every week I get up in here to talk about members' rights to speak when bills are moved urgently and there are guillotine debates and we finish early because of the new family friendly hours. The Premier said today this is a one-in-100-year event in Queensland and a crisis like we have not seen before, yet the government gives two hours to debate this bill. It is such a serious issue, yet the government wants only two hours debate, less the 15 minutes the minister has already been given, with only one hour notice from when we were provided the bill. I thank the Clerk for getting it to all members as soon as he received it from the government.

We have been waiting on and expecting this bill for two days. All of a sudden at 7.30 pm the minister introduces the bill. There is no reason why the bill could not have been sent to members tonight. Members would have had the opportunity during the night to read it—to actually read it—and work out what is in it. There are so many impacts on people right across Queensland who are pre-polling or going to voting booths in a week and a half, as well as in terms of getting their how-to-vote cards. A lot of members in this House spent two to three hours in a health briefing this afternoon. The briefing went longer than the time members will get to debate this bill. That was just the health briefing, let alone all the electoral changes and the planning changes. By my quick flick of the bill, it involves about five ministerial responsibilities.

There is no reason, none, why all members, including the crossbench, could not have had the bill overnight to have the opportunity to read it. The crossbench will not get a chance possibly to speak on this because of the two-hour time line and the condensed time line. I suspect that later in the evening the House will adjourn and we will not come back tomorrow. It is a waste of a day. We could have had a proper debate on this tomorrow. We said today—and I gave a commitment to the Leader of the House and the government—that we would work with the government to observe the 1.5-metre distance between us, we would sit three apart, and I would give as many pairs as the government wanted to have their members off the precinct.

We said we would do all of that. Had the government agreed with that, we could have had a good debate about this bill tomorrow. Yes, it will be a two-hour debate—it will be a rushed debate—but COVID-19 does not just impact the five ministers who will get a chance to speak on this and the five

shadow ministers who will get a chance to speak on this. Ten members out of 93 will get a chance to speak on this—the biggest issue in 100 years, the Premier said, that she hopes to never again see in our lifetime, and this parliament gives it the disrespect of only two hours of debate.

A lot of the members are regional members. They are not flying out at midnight tonight. There are no flights available for them to get home to their constituencies or their families tonight after we suspend the House tonight. They will be here tomorrow. There is nothing this bill will solve between 10 o'clock tonight and eight o'clock tomorrow morning that could not be delayed during that time and debated properly tomorrow. It would have given people a proper opportunity.

I look around the House and I see many of the members sitting over there who have been here for a few more years than a lot of other members. They always get up in this place and talk about how important it is that legislation is properly scrutinised. This will not be properly scrutinised. We have had an hour.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: It was the former member for Bundamba, but I am also looking at Minister Hinchliffe. I have heard him talk many a time in this place about bills being properly scrutinised. Urgent bills do not go through the committee system, but a lot of times for urgent bills that do not go through the committee system we allow time for proper debate and allow the debate to run its natural course.

We are getting messages from our constituents saying that tomorrow they are closing their businesses. We are not going to be able to talk about that. We are not going to be here. I cannot speak to this bill. I have spent two days allowing as many opportunities as I can for people to talk to me about the hospitality industry and the impacts that COVID-19 will have on communities.

About an hour ago I talked to Bernie Hogan from the Queensland Hotels Association. He took 180 calls today from pubs and hospitality industry businesses that put people off today. Where is his voice? Where is the pub voice? Where is the community sector voice? Where is the construction industry voice?

Mr Whiting interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: They may make light of the fact that they are in here and the member who interjected may say he can represent, through his wise words, all those communities and interest groups that are tonight worrying how tomorrow they will afford to put food on the table because they may not have a job tomorrow because of COVID-19. This parliament disgraces those people by saying that such a serious issue is worth two hours of debate.

The Premier spoke about this being a one-in-100-year event. We only ever hear about huge floods being one-in-100-year or one-in-500-year floods. We are now talking about a virus and the over \$10 billion in damage it is going to do to the economy in the next two years. This parliament disgraces the people impacted by the virus by debating this bill for two hours.

There is no reason we could not be in here tomorrow because we are going to be here anyway. We will not be debating these laws. Members will now be organising flights home to their constituencies. It is a wasted opportunity for members to express the viewpoints of their constituents regarding this important issue. This is an important issue, but giving it two hours of debate does not reflect its importance.

I cannot understand why the government thinks they need to rush this through without proper scrutiny. I am not even talking about scrutiny. I am talking about the ability to read the bill before the debate. Members had the bill an hour ago. We were then summoned back in here at 7.15 pm to debate a bill that deals with not only the health response but all the other issues such as the planning, the retail shop trading hours, the distribution issues, the voting that is happening as we speak, the pre-polling and all those sorts of things. We have two hours to debate that. It is not enough time.

I think it is disgraceful. We should be sitting tomorrow. I know that the government will be adjourning the House tonight. The Leader of the House has advised that we are not coming back tomorrow. Mr Speaker, I put it to you that we should be coming back tomorrow. We should be giving members the opportunity to represent their constituencies that are dealing with, in the Premier's own words, what she does not want to deal with again in her lifetime. I think it is disgraceful to the people of Queensland that this parliament is about to debate this bill for two hours when we should be having a free-flowing and natural debate tomorrow—a debate like we used to have.