




Speech By
Jarrold Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

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MOTION

Order of Business

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (12.03 pm): I can advise the Leader of the House and parliament that, having just considered this request, I do not support it. I do not support the suspension of parliament, because this parliament is here to hold this government to account. This parliament is here to ensure that the Treasurer answers questions about why there is not a proper economic stimulus package for the people of Queensland. Right around Queensland as we speak, people are at work, having coffees in cafes and acknowledging the federal government's rule with respect to social distancing and 1.5 metres. Why are we saying to the people of Queensland that they ought to live their normal lives as much as possible with respect to going to work but that parliament is a different story because Labor members of parliament think they are a special breed of Queenslanders to whom special rules should apply? It is not the case. Both chief health officers—of Queensland and the Commonwealth—said that life can go on, other than the measures mentioned today in terms of 100 people in an inside venue or 500 at an outside venue. The advice was that if you are symptomatic of COVID-19 you ought not go to work.

Mr Speaker, leading into the parliamentary sitting, you instituted some very good advice earlier this week and last that if members of parliament were symptomatic of COVID-19 they ought not be here this week. We followed that rule. We had nearly a whole day's sitting yesterday. We adjourned a little early. We had non-government business. Did the world come crashing down around us? No. Parliament went on, because parliament is important. Yes, as the Leader of the House says, the federal parliament is doing some things next week. Let us deal with this week and with the here and now. Today, businesses in our local communities across Queensland have laid off people because they cannot afford them. Businesses are wondering whether tomorrow they can open their doors. What they asked local representatives to make the Labor government aware of is that they are not happy with the government's current economic stimulus package. We should be debating those issues this week. Tomorrow in non-government business we should hold the government to account.

The Leader of the Opposition was about to introduce an important bill dealing with domestic violence. Even though we have the crisis of COVID-19, the wheels of government keep turning in Queensland—and they must keep turning. Ministers still have responsibilities. In ministerial statements this morning, some ministers did not talk about COVID-19 but about portfolio matters, as should be the case. The wheels of government, the business of government, goes on.

My other point to the Leader of the House in regard to this highly anticipated bill concerning COVID-19 is that all morning government members highlighted how quick they were to deal with this issue. We still have not seen a bill in the House in terms of how the Labor government will fix these issues or provide solutions. We heard that shadow ministers have been briefed. Removing the ability of non-government members to draw attention to these issues in the House is disrespectful to members and gives the government an easy out on other issues. For instance, there is a youth detention centre

in crisis, in riot, as we speak. Is the government telling us that we should just ignore these issues? Should we not draw to the House's attention that currently a riot is happening in a youth detention centre in Queensland? No.

The government wishes that all these other matters not be debated or heard of this week in parliament, but that is not the case. It is the opposition's job to hold this government to account. It is the opposition's job to ensure that it holds the government to account in its response to COVID-19 and, in many aspects, for its lack of response compared to eight other state jurisdictions and the Commonwealth government. This morning, we heard of the New South Wales government's \$2.4 billion economic stimulus package for its businesses and the people of New South Wales. All this government has offered is a loan that people must pay back and the deferral of a tax which in six months will end up being a double tax. The government does not want to debate these issues. This morning I heard from pubs, clubs and construction companies. I heard of weddings being cancelled—my grandfather's 90th birthday just got cancelled—and of DJs, the entertainment industry and restaurants cancelling events.

The wheels of government continue and must continue to turn. The parliament is what holds the government to account and what ensures the people understand if the government is not doing a good job. In the past five years we have seen so much arrogance in this House from this government—cutting down hours, opposition time and debate time. When I talk about opposition I include crossbench members. This takes it to a whole new level.

Yesterday we finished debating the resources bill. We put measures in place for social distancing. If Queenslanders can do it, we can do it—and we did it yesterday without any great fanfare.

Mrs D'Ath: Are we practising 1½ metres right now?

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection. I told the Leader of the House this morning that we will sit apart instead of using every chair. We can do it. We can implement those measures. We can double our efforts in terms of social distancing. That does not mean that we cannot introduce the domestic violence legislation the opposition leader was about to introduce and now will not have the opportunity to do. That does not mean that we cannot talk about the riot happening in the youth detention centre at the moment.

Mrs D'Ath interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The Leader of the House will cease her interjections.

Mr BLEIJIE: That does not mean that we should not debate the crime crisis that is happening right across Queensland. What I fear most is that when we suspend and reconvene to debate the health bills, whenever they come in—we will probably debate them tomorrow—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition will cease their interjections.

Mr BLEIJIE: What I fear most after today is where this will go. Will we even come back? When is parliament sitting next? Will we come back? What about the budget—supply, public servants and their jobs? What is happening? This morning the Premier urged all employers to 'do the right thing'. I say to the Premier: there will not be any employers able to do the right thing if they have to close their businesses down because of the lack of economic stimulus and support this Palaszczuk Labor government is giving to our businesses.

How is it that across the country the federal government has given \$17.2 billion as a start and the New South Wales, Tasmanian and Western Australian governments are giving support to local small businesses, but the most this state government offers is a loan to be repaid and a deferral of tax to be paid—double in six months time? That is not support. Businesses are putting people off today. The only thing that stands between the community and the Labor government is the opposition and this parliament. That is why I do not support suspending the parliament.

We can institute social distancing, as we are advising Queenslanders to do, without stopping work. The wheels of government do not stop and should not stop turning. We should be doing everything we can this week to make sure that by Friday of this week small businesses can still open their doors.