




Speech By
Joseph Kelly

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

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COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (4.01 pm): I support the COVID emergency response bill. Queensland has done an outstanding job of managing COVID-19. Do you know how I know that, Mr Speaker? I know that because every time I see Dr Jeannette Young I say to her, ‘Dr Young, you have done a fantastic job of managing COVID-19.’ Because she is such a humble person, she turns to me and says, ‘No, no. I haven’t done a good job. Queenslanders have done a good job.’ Queenslanders have done a great job. She wants to put the credit right back where it is due. It is right back on all of those people in our state who have done the right thing to manage COVID-19.

I think we should also reflect that we have been led by a Premier who has done a great job. We were the first state to declare a public health emergency back in January—the 29th, if I recall correctly—and we were ridiculed by the other states and perhaps even by the federal government for taking this action. We were the first state to release an emergency response package. All throughout this pandemic, our priority has remained on keeping Queenslanders safe.

From a clinical perspective, as a nurse, I can tell honourable members that what we have to do sounds pretty simple. We have to wash our hands, we have to maintain social distance, we have to get tested if we have symptoms and, ideally, we should install an app. It sounds quite simple, but a lot of things need to happen to make all of this a reality and a lot of legislation needs to be enacted to enable those things to occur.

This bill is about continuing the legislation that has been passed to allow these things to continue to occur because we are not out of the woods. That is what QNMU General Secretary Beth Mohle said to me yesterday when I rang her to discuss some aspects of this speech and this issue. She said to me, ‘This disease will come back at you really quick if you drop your guard,’ and we have seen that time and time and time again. I support this legislation because it is a really key part of keeping Queenslanders safe. If we drop our guard too early, if we relax, this disease is going to get out of hand. A couple of things will happen when this disease gets out of hand, and we know this because we have seen it time and time again and we continue to see it around the world. In fact, today I had the great pleasure of having lunch with the ambassador for Argentina, and the stories from Latin America about how this disease is affecting people there are quite shocking. Two things happen when this disease gets out of control: (1) people who are vulnerable die and (2) health workers die.

There is a really great World War I memorial on the walls of the Coorparoo School of Arts and I like it a lot for a couple of reasons. Firstly, it was raised in honour of all of the local community members of Coorparoo who served in the First World War. The Coorparoo community raised this rather magnificent memorial by raising money themselves. The second reason I like this a lot is because it specifically names the nurses who served and some of the nurses who perished in World War I.

Why do I mention this today? Sadly, we are now at a point where more nurses have died during the pandemic in just over 11 months than died in nearly five years of the First World War. I want people to hear and remember this. As at 28 October, to the best of the ability of the International Council of

Nurses to gather data—and it is not easy to gather data—over 1,500 nurses have died globally as a result of caring for people with COVID-19 in 44 countries. That is over 1,500 nurses of all ages and stages of life. We should not forget the doctors, the allied health professionals, the paramedics, the pathology workers, the wardies, the admin officers or the security guards who have died. Of course, that number is going to be much higher because we do not have statistics from 151 countries. I will read from the media release put out by the International Council of Nurses on 28 October. It states—

ICN's own analysis suggests that about 10% of cases globally are among healthcare workers.

As of this week there are more than 43 million cases worldwide with approximately 2.6% of those, 1.1 million, resulting in deaths.

Even if the case fatality ratio among the more than four million healthcare workers infected is only 0.5%, in excess of 20,000 healthcare workers could have died from the virus.

I repeat: in excess of 20,000. This is carnage. It is absolute carnage and that is why we need to support this bill. We need to support this bill to keep Queenslanders safe and to keep other health workers safe.

Unions representing nurses, midwives and other health workers around the world have been battling to keep members safe. I support the recent industrial action taken by some nurses in the USA where state governors have refused to implement public health measures that we take for granted here. Yet while refusing to implement basic public health measures which we know from evidence will save lives, they expect nurses and other health workers to go to work and risk their lives and we are seeing those nurses die. Just on Saturday I posted on Facebook a story of a 38-year-old nurse who perished in the United States.

We have a strong union here and we have a culture that respects workers' rights. We have good WHS laws. None of this has happened overnight. We did not start doing it because COVID-19 started killing nurses and other health workers. The conversations between governments and employers of nurses and the unions who represent health workers are ongoing and productive. I am so pleased to be part of a government that gave a commitment to the QNMU during the recent election campaign to improve PPE effectiveness. I am so pleased that our government is continuing its good work with this bill for all Queenslanders and for all health workers. I am supportive of my union, which has joined forces with other nursing unions via Global Nurses United to call on the World Health Organization to do a better job at encouraging all jurisdictions to protect health workers. For the benefit of the House I table a copy of the letter from the GNU to the World Health Organization.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 19 November 2020, from Global Nurses United to the Director-General, World Health Organization, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, regarding the COVID-19 pandemic [330](#).

Over 1,500 nurses are dead. Honourable members should remember that the next time someone tries to shake their hand or give them a hug. They should remember that the next time they go out for dinner and someone complains because it is a little bit inconvenient to have to fill in a piece of paper or fill in an app. They should remember that the next time someone tries to tell them that this disease is harmless. Over 1,500 nurses and many, many other health workers are dead in just over 11 months. They should remember that as they vote to support this bill.