




Speech By
Linus Power

MEMBER FOR LOGAN

Record of Proceedings, 22 April 2020

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE BILL

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (9.29 pm): I have been reflecting on the circumstances we are faced with. I feel that in the future we may well be asked by perhaps a grandnephew or grandchild about the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. They may ask, 'Weren't you in parliament during that time? What did you do?' Members like the Premier and the Minister for Health will be able to answer, 'I kept Queensland safe.' Others like the Treasurer and the Minister for State Development, the member for Woodridge, will be able to say, 'I fought to keep industry and jobs alive in Queensland.' The Minister for Education will be able to say, 'I kept both teachers and students safe while running the largest online learning program Queensland will ever saw.' The Minister for Housing, the member for Springwood, is keeping people in homes. He will have something he is able to tell people in the future. At the same time, he is protecting the integrity of the rental market.

When the Prime Minister said that no-one was to be evicted during the coronavirus, he was looking out for both tenants and landlords. He wanted to see tenants continue to pay rent. He wanted to see that preserved. He wanted to see tenants connected to their landlords and their houses so that when things are restored that market will be intact. He also wanted to see tenants stay in houses. He did not want to see a massive increase in homelessness that would lead to further health problems.

I have looked carefully at what the minister has proposed. It is a balanced approach dealing with the principles that the Prime Minister outlined. I was disappointed to see that in the middle of a crisis there were those—and some on the other side are included in this—who took this as an opportunity to mislead Queenslanders, both landlords and tenants, when it comes to the situation we face.

Ms Pease: Who would do that?

Mr POWER: One of the issues mentioned was that a tenant would not have to prove in any way that they had lost income. I had heard this said. I notice that the member for Burleigh still believes this mistruth.

A policeman from Mundoolun gave me a call. He is a landlord. He said, 'I have heard what has been said.' I said to him, 'The member for Springwood is actually from a small business family. He knows about these types of investments. I do not think it is right, but what if I ring him and get that the information?' We had been told that all the information was available, but for the member for Burleigh's benefit I point out that there is a website called The Hub. Is that correct minister?

Mr de Brenni: Yes.

Mr POWER: The minister said, 'Linus, just scan down to the section where it has commonly asked questions.' One of the commonly asked questions was for landlords. I dutifully went to that. It explicitly states—there is no ambiguity there whatsoever—that to get any kind of rental discount people would have to show that they have been impacted by COVID-19. It is absolutely clear. It is there in black and white.

Mr Hart: What did it say?

Mr POWER: It went even further to say that if agreement could not be reached—and obviously agreement is not going to be reached if someone cannot prove they have been affected if they are not going to show their wage documentation and their statements from Centrelink—the RTA could demand all of the documentation necessary to make a decision. Admittedly, I had not sought to find this out, but I asked the minister and I was given absolutely clear directions where to find the information. It took 30 seconds of effort to understand the policy that is so important to both landlords and tenants. What we heard today from the member for Burleigh is that he never bothered to spend 30 seconds to actually find out what the policy is.

There will come a time when we are asked what we did at this time. Some members will have to say, 'I intentionally misled tenants and landlords in an attempt to score political points.' That is something that will stay with them. I commend the minister for taking a balanced approach to this. This primarily looks after the rental market. It not only connects tenants and landlords, which is essential if we are going to restore this market after this crisis, but also allows tenants who have been massively impacted by the crisis to stay in their own homes, as the Prime Minister outlined. I am deeply disturbed that people see this as an opportunity to mislead people. This is so simple. It is vital that people pay their rent on time and in full. When they come back into the job market we know they will do that.

When we look back, one of the things the Premier would be able to say with dutiful and rightful pride is, 'I put differences aside to work with the Prime Minister for the good of our nation.' I think that this could stand as a lesson for others. Some members on the other side—I commend them because I have had some good discussions with them; I am not going to single anyone out because they will probably damage their position—they have been useful in terms of feeding information through about cases and developments and what is happening in workplaces. We have been working together for our state. I commend those members for that.

However, some of the LNP leadership should hang their heads in shame. I imagine that their answer to a grandnephew or grandchild's question in the future will be deeply embarrassing. The opposition leader could say, 'I made a video of myself touching groceries and then putting them back for others to pick up.' That is bizarre, I know. Others could say, 'I tried to wreck an airline and throw thousands of families out of work.' Others on the LNP front bench could claim that it is all a scare campaign. This is on the parliamentary record. It is bizarre, I know. Others could say that they attacked good initiatives, undermining public confidence in our health message at the worst possible time. The member for Kawana could say that he ignored the Prime Minister's 1.5-metre rule for workplaces by calling us all in here.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr McArdle): Member for Logan, I do appreciate your words of wisdom, but could you please come back to the bill. You are straying significantly from the terms of the bill on any interpretation.

Mr POWER: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, I appreciate your guidance. That is their legacy. I need to emphasise that this is not the approach of everyone in the LNP. I will have to answer the question about what contribution I made to the COVID-19 response. I know that I tried to be positive, to give feedback and to be constructive about what was happening in the electorate of Logan to help us through this.

The House is proposing that the Economics and Governance Committee, of which I am a member, conduct an inquiry and report on both the Queensland government's response to COVID-19, especially its economic response, and the Australian government's response to COVID-19. This is part of what is being debated in this bill. This is a serious role that we would be undertaking. This is part of the ongoing examination of the situation that is contained in this bill that does need to be passed tonight. I think it is essential that it is passed. I encourage everyone to vote to pass this bill.

The committee would take this role seriously and look at some of the initiatives and threats that face us, especially on the economic front, and the role of the federal government, which I think has been extremely positive, how it affects Queensland and how we fit into this. We want to be positive and helpful. We want to add to the knowledge around a difficult policy response. I want to be able to say in the future that I helped in the most serious crisis we have collectively ever faced. My support for the COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill 2020 is in this sense. I want to say to our future generation, 'I carefully evaluated the facts, I helped improve the situation and I voted to support the COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill.' I encourage all members to do the same.