




Speech By
Hon. Mark Bailey

MEMBER FOR MILLER

Record of Proceedings, 22 April 2020

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE BILL

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.08 pm): I rise to support the COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill 2020. There can be no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on every aspect of life. Whether it is physical distancing or working from home arrangements, which many of us are adjusting to in our community, or the dire economic impact, no area of life has been left untouched.

That is certainly the case also in terms of the Transport and Main Roads portfolio where we are encountering unique issues and problems. For instance, we quickly came to terms with the health risk posed by international vessels transiting Queensland waters and berthing at Queensland ports. We acted early and we acted hard and we have had no known infections come into Queensland via a Queensland port to date, in contrast to a certain other state, and we aim to keep it that way. We have also had to make adjustments about how we deliver customer services to thousands of Queenslanders, whether it is for rego renewal, driver licensing or the many other services at a TMR customer service centre.

We have had to intervene across every mode of transport to ensure connectivity in regional Queensland. Many of the issues we have encountered have been caused by requirements that exist in transport legislation. In some cases, that can be as simple as complying with a time requirement such as when people have to renew their driver's licence. In other cases, our transport legislation has required people to do things which now, of course, the health advice recommends not doing. In all these cases, we have been confronted by the human impact of our laws on ordinary Queenslanders who have been trying their best to do the right thing. Largely, that has certainly been the case. I commend Queenslanders for their cooperation and their commitment to dealing with the times. We understand how hard those resolute efforts have been.

The bill provides a legislative framework which will have application across a whole suite of legislation including transport legislation. The bill sets up a scheme by which government will have the ability and the authority to make certain changes to the law where that is needed specifically in response to COVID-19. While we have been countering many of the issues thrown up by the pandemic so far, we know there will be other challenges as we progress. That is why it is necessary for government to be armed with the tools necessary to respond to this rapidly changing and evolving environment. If further measures are needed, the government will bring further legislation before the House.

We will not be found wanting when it comes to our response to this health emergency. In my portfolio we have already taken steps to address some of those issues that have manifested. I was very pleased that we were able to give comfort to older drivers in relation to the requirement to hold a current medical certificate. This issue was a source of great concern for many older drivers, their carers and also their family members. Indeed, I know that many members in this place would be familiar with the issue as many of them raised it with me.

While senior Queenslanders were urged to remain at home by health advice, under the transport legislation they were required to have a current medical certificate in order for their driver's licence to be valid. Many such medical certificates became due for renewal, and senior drivers were worried about

having to attend their doctor's surgery or their optometrist given the increased risk that that trip presented. The changes we introduced included that medical certificates that were obtained to meet the senior driver requirements that expired after 29 January 2020 will be considered valid until six months after the emergency ends. During this emergency period, senior drivers will not be committing an offence if they drive while not holding a valid medical certificate.