




Speech By  
**Nikki Boyd**

**MEMBER FOR PINE RIVERS**

---

Record of Proceedings, 21 May 2020

**JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION (COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE)  
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms BOYD** (Pine Rivers—ALP) (4.13 pm): I rise to make a contribution on the Justice and Other Legislation (COVID-19 Emergency Response) Amendment Bill 2020. What a treat it is to follow the member for Nicklin, the Dr Seuss of the opposition. He is the master of rhyme and repetition. We have heard limericks from him, but I am waiting for the day that he breaks out in song. I think he can get it out this term.

While those opposite may be driven by front pages, editorials and headlines, that is not the KPI for the government. Over on this side of the House, we are just simply getting on with the job of the recovery and the rebuilding. Here in Queensland we are an absolute success story. While they are not our KPIs, what we have seen over the last several weeks is the ineptitude of the opposition. I will go as far as to say that we see the *Courier-Mail* as the opposition here in Queensland because we are certainly not seeing anything out of the LNP. There are no fresh ideas and no positivity. We just have Debbie Downers over there going on and on and on in the nightly news, and people in my community are saying to me that they are sick of it.

We are here this afternoon to address what we need to do to get on with the job of recovery, and this COVID-19 emergency response bill does just that. I want to speak specifically to the amendments that this bill contains in the health portfolio legislation that support Queensland Health's emergency response efforts. Queensland Health's response to the COVID-19 public health emergency has affected every aspect of the lives of Queenslanders. The sacrifice has been great but it has also been effective. We are now gradually relaxing restrictions to allow people to slowly return to their normal lives. However, the emergency response effort is not over. We must ensure that Queensland's health system can continue to effectively respond to the ever-shifting challenges posed by COVID-19.

One of Queensland Health's earliest steps to respond to the COVID-19 emergency was to increase the powers of the Chief Health Officer and emergency officers under the Public Health Act. Public health directions issued by the Chief Health Officer are one of the key elements of the COVID-19 emergency response. Public health directions are a flexible and responsive mechanism to reduce and respond to the spread of COVID-19. The powers of emergency officers have also been a critical part of Queensland Health's response. Emergency officers issue notices requiring people to quarantine or isolate and they enforce notices and public health directions.

This bill contains amendments to the Public Health Act to clarify the powers of the Chief Health Officer and emergency officers to support them in continuing their work reducing the spread of COVID-19. The amendments clarify the detention powers of emergency officers when a public health direction comes into effect and that an emergency officer may give a child's parent or guardian a direction for a child, either instead of or in addition to giving the direction to the child itself.

The bill also amends the Public Health Act to allow the chief executive of Queensland Health to delegate their power to disclose confidential information from the notifiable conditions register to more than one delegate. This will relieve pressure from the chief executive and the Chief Health Officer and

allow for information to be used for contact tracing in a timely manner. This is critical for managing the spread of COVID-19 and will allow the chief executive and the Chief Health Officer to focus on the most critical aspects of the COVID-19 response.

One of Queensland Health's achievements in responding to COVID-19 has been increasing its ICU bed capacity through an agreement with private hospitals. This means Queensland's health infrastructure is ready for any future COVID-19 outbreaks. The bill amends the Private Health Facilities Act to provide flexibility for the Chief Health Officer to waive or defer licence application fees for private health facilities if a private health facility has to change or renew its licence to provide services to patients under an agreement with Queensland Health. This supports our colleagues in the private health sector and ensures private facilities are not penalised for providing services to patients under the new arrangements.

The bill amends the Mental Health Act to allow Queensland Health to flexibly respond to COVID-19 outbreaks that impact authorised mental health services. A need may arise to move one or more patients out of an authorised mental health service to respond to a COVID-19 outbreak. In these circumstances, sufficient beds may not be available at existing authorised mental health services. To ensure that facilities are available to meet the needs of mental health patients, the Chief Psychiatrist will have the power to declare an authorised mental health service and appoint an administrator in writing for the duration of the COVID-19 emergency. This will allow an authorised mental health service to be quickly established and ensure continuity of care for some of the most vulnerable patients in our state.

This bill also gives the Chief Psychiatrist the power to grant leave or access to community treatment for mental health patients or discharge patients if satisfied that this is necessary to comply with a public health direction or a direction issued by an emergency officer under the Public Health Act. This is to ensure that in the event of any inconsistency between an order issued under the Mental Health Act and a public health direction, the Chief Psychiatrist can comply with the public health direction. Granting leave will be an option of last resort. In making their decision, the Chief Psychiatrist must have regard for the patient's treatment and care needs, the safety and welfare of the patient and the safety and welfare of others.

The amendments in this bill are welcome as another important step in supporting Queensland's fight against COVID-19. These amendments support emergency response efforts. They protect vulnerable cohorts and they mitigate potential disruptions to the health system. I commend the bill to the House.