




Speech By
Nikki Boyd

MEMBER FOR PINE RIVERS

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COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms BOYD** (Pine Rivers—ALP) (4.29 pm): I rise to support the COVID-19 Emergency Response and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. One of our earliest steps in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic was to increase the powers of the Chief Health Officer, Dr Jeannette Young, and all emergency officers under the Public Health Act. We listened to the expert health advice and we gave the Chief Health Officer and our emergency officers the powers they needed to get the job done. This is in stark contrast to the members of the LNP, who second-guessed the Chief Health Officer's advice at every turn.

Mr Power: It was constant!

Ms BOYD: I take the interjection from the member for Logan. It was constant. Those opposite continue to this day to advocate for politicians to make these decisions and not health experts. It is dangerous and it shows that they learnt nothing from their election defeat on 31 October. Queensland's response has been world leading and the actions of the Premier, Dr Young and the Deputy Premier, alongside all of our critical workers, including health workers, police and paramedics, have kept Queenslanders safe and put us on the path to recovery. I thank them and I thank all Queenslanders who have done such a remarkable job of working together to keep one another safe.

While our response in Queensland means life is now well and truly getting back to a COVID-safe normal, we know COVID-19 still represents a significant risk. It is an insidious virus and we have seen around the world the devastating human, economic and social consequences a large outbreak can bring. That is why this bill is important and urgent in extending the operation of all COVID-19 related legislation which is still required to respond to the impacts of the pandemic.

I was proud to serve as the assistant health minister during the previous term of government and I am very proud to be given the opportunity by the Premier to continue to work with the Deputy Premier as Assistant Minister for Local Government, which brings me to the amendments to the Local Government Act which deliver a commitment we made to the people of Queensland during the past election. I want to be very clear that these amendments are not about a single person or a single council. They could not be, because we announced we would take this action back in early October before there was a vacancy in the Rockhampton or, indeed, Townsville regional councils.

These amendments mean that any mayoral vacancies that arise during the first 12 months of a local government's term will be filled by a by-election. For councillor vacancies that arise during the first 12 months of a local government's term the council will decide by resolution to fill the vacancy by a by-election or by appointing a runner-up. There are no changes proposed for filling vacancies in the second, third or fourth year of a local government term.

This bill also provides for transitional arrangements to cover the period between when we made this announcement in early October 2020 and the point at which the bill commences. Queensland's communities deserve the opportunity to choose their leaders and to have confidence, faith and trust in

the democratic process. These changes will benefit local communities because it gives Queenslanders an additional opportunity to nominate as candidates for election to the vacancy and Queenslanders the opportunity to vote for whoever candidate they prefer in the by-election.

After being sworn in as Assistant Minister for Local Government I got straight to work calling each mayor across Queensland. I finished those calls and, while we talked about a multitude of different topics, I am confident these amendments also have the support of Queensland's mayors and councils. I am also very pleased that the LGAQ are supportive of these amendments. I am proud of our record on this side of the House, of working with and listening to Queensland local councils, mayors and councillors. We will continue to build on this work and we will continue to listen to councils. I commend the bill to the House.