




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 21 May 2020

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

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (11.47 am): I rise to support this important bill. The world of today has been completely transformed. These are unprecedented times, and we must be ready to take unprecedented steps to protect Queenslanders, their jobs, their businesses and their livelihoods.

Key to this bill is allowing thousands of Queensland construction and cleaning workers to access their long service leave much earlier than they can right now. These are hardworking Queenslanders who right now are doing it tough. They trying to cover the cost of living: the rent, the mortgage, the groceries, the power bills. The government has stepped in to deliver rebates and relief, but we know that we must do more to ease that financial distress in any way we can. Through these amendments, employees in the building and construction industry and contract cleaners who have at least five years service can apply for all or part of their portable long service entitlements up to five years earlier than they would ordinarily have access to their leave.

For example, an employee who has been working in the construction industry for eight years may still be working during the crisis, but their partner may have unfortunately lost their job or their family is struggling with living expenses. The worker would not be able to access their long service leave right now, but this bill, if passed, would allow the employee to take long service leave already accrued after five years. He or she could then contribute to pay the bills and keep their family going. These changes will give thousands of workers peace of mind during this uncertain time. We are protecting their futures in their industries and we are protecting the future of the construction and contract cleaning industries, which are a vital part of our economy.

Along with families, this pandemic has also devastated our small businesses. Some of the hardest hit have been our restaurants and cafes. I want to acknowledge all of the incredible small businesses that have quickly transitioned and adapted to this new reality and have pivoted their businesses to online and delivery models. Small businesses are the engine room of our economy and the lifeblood of our communities. Takeaway has been a lifeline to so many small businesses in this sector. These amendments to the Liquor Act allow these businesses to sell alcohol along with a meal. This is a huge boost for businesses so they can keep revenue coming in at a time when they need it most.

It is also a huge win for consumers who, like me, enjoy a nice glass of red with their takeaway pizza. Mr Chester Wine Bar in Fortitude Valley was thrilled to be able to deliver their customers wine with their takeaway food orders. As you can imagine, as a wine bar, alcohol is pretty key to their business. We know that cash flow is key to business now more than ever, so allowing businesses like Mr Chester to sell a bottle of wine with their food gives them a better chance of making it through this crisis and keeping Queenslanders employed.

Finally, I would like to also speak to the bill's amendments to the manufactured homes act. My Waterford community is home to many residential parks. These are the homes of many seniors in my electorate and they have been suffering during the COVID-19 crisis. Many of them have been isolated

from family, unable to leave their homes. The last thing we want is for these people who have suffered so much to face further undue distress. Home owners in these parks are concerned that social distancing restrictions put them at a disadvantage by preventing them from properly advocating as a group against market reviews that are mandated in the act. The amendment ensures that government can address the impacts of COVID-19 in a way that is fair, balanced and proportionate to the health restrictions in place by making changes to the process set out in the act.

This bill is all about supporting Queenslanders—their families, their jobs and their businesses. The Palaszczuk government is taking unprecedented steps because we are in unprecedented times. It is absolutely essential that we keep our small businesses open, keep people in jobs, support them to pay their staff and make sure we come out of this crisis stronger and more resilient. I commend the bill to the House.