




Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles
MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

Record of Proceedings, 17 June 2020

MOTION

Queensland Border Closure

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (5.05 pm): I rise to oppose the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition, and I do so because it is against the interests of Queenslanders. I guess I should not be surprised, but I am. This woman wants to be premier of our state, but she will not stand up for our state. She has proven again today that she cannot be trusted with the health of the people of Queensland. What she does not understand is that the border restrictions are about stopping the virus coming into Queensland from states where it is. It is all well and good to say that we have flattened the curve—and we have and we have done very well—but other states have not.

In the last 24 hours Victoria has recorded 21 new cases of the virus—and she wants them to come here to Queensland! That takes their active cases to 70. Here in Queensland we have just five. Since this pandemic reached our shores, New South Wales and Victoria have had hundreds of locally acquired cases where a contact could not be identified. In Queensland we have had just 42 in total. Queensland acted quickly and decisively. That is why we have been able to contain the virus and start to open up Queensland for Queenslanders, not for Victorians.

On 29 January I issued a public health emergency order. Queensland was the first state to do this. On 30 January the Premier convened our first Queensland Disaster Management Committee meeting. On 1 February we started screening passengers. On 6 February we legislated to extend that order—all of us here did. Knowing that cases would continue to increase, we boosted elective surgery. By 2 March we announced we would triple emergency department capacity and double our ICU capabilities—all ahead of those other states. We invested in gloves, masks, gowns and ventilators. We invested in more machines that could test for the virus. At that time we had just nine cases.

On 12 March Tom Hanks tested positive at the Gold Coast University Hospital. He joined six other positive cases. On 19 March the federal government closed Australia's borders and they remain closed. Here in Queensland we passed laws to give greater powers to health officials. On 20 March we moved to restrict access to our Indigenous communities. On 23 March we had 60 new cases on that day alone—the highest so far—taking our total to 319. At that time we decided we had to shut down non-essential services—pubs, clubs and restaurants.

On 24 March Queensland recorded a jump of 78 confirmed cases. That is also the day we announced a \$1.2 billion investment in our hospitals and part of a \$4 billion package to extend tax breaks for small to medium sized businesses. It was on that day that the Chief Health Officer issued a direction implementing a range of border restrictions that would take effect at midnight the following day. It is all of those initiatives that kept Queenslanders safe.

It was not until 25 March that the first Queenslander died in a Queensland hospital as a result of the virus. Those were dark days. We had modelling that showed one in four Queenslanders would contract the virus and 30,000 would die. I recall briefing those opposite on that modelling. On 8 May we released our road map to easing restrictions in three stages, roughly the same three stages as the Morrison government proposed. We have now moved through stages 1 and 2.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order, members!

Dr MILES: The Commonwealth road map said that leisure travel should recommence in July at stage 3.

Dr Rowan interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Moggill, I just called you to order. You continued to interject. I put you under a warning.

Dr MILES: That is when we proposed that the Chief Health Officer would lift Queensland's border restrictions pending a review at the end of the month, exactly in line with the Morrison government's plan. So far this month we have had just six new cases. The only reason we have avoided a catastrophe is because of all of these initiatives. The numbers make that plain. Those opposite come in here trying to make themselves relevant by criticising our actions—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Through the chair, please.

Dr MILES:—but Queenslanders know they are wrong.