




Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles
MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

Record of Proceedings, 14 July 2020

MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Coronavirus, Queensland Border Closure

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (2.20 pm): It is often said that a week is a long time in Queensland politics, so what a difference a few weeks make. The last time we were here, the member for Everton and the member for Nanango could not talk about anything but the borders. Today, they will talk about everything but the borders. We have had question time and we have just heard the speeches of some members opposite, but there was no mention at all of the 64 little faux pas over the border.

Mr Mander interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order! Pause the clock. Member for Everton, you are warned. You have been interjecting repeatedly. You have had your opportunity to make a contribution.

Dr MILES: In March, the Palaszczuk government made the incredibly difficult decision to close Queensland's borders to the other states and territories. We saw the community transmission of COVID-19 in New South Wales and Victoria. Closing our borders was a necessary measure to keep Queenslanders safe. Our strong health response was the first step toward Queensland's plan to unite and recover. If, like our friends down south, we were experiencing hundreds of new cases a day here in Queensland, we would not be able to start opening our economy again. In fact, Queenslanders would be facing going back into lockdown as Melbournians are. That is not something we want to see.

We on this side of the chamber have stood behind Queensland's plan to unite and recover. We stood by our plan even as the Prime Minister and the Premier of New South Wales were banging at the door, begging to be let in. We stood by our plan as the Leader of the Opposition called for the opening of our borders. We stood by our plan when the member for Currumbin said that the borders needed to be opened in every sense of the word. We did that when the member for Burleigh put up a billboard calling for the borders to be opened and when the LNP put up a billboard in Townsville calling for the borders to be opened. In fact, 64 times they called on us to give up on the health of Queenslanders and open the borders. Those opposite demanded, they moved motions, they asked questions, they made private members' statements and adjournment speeches. It was on their Facebook pages, on Sky News and in op-eds in the *Courier-Mail* and the *Gold Coast Bulletin*. Back then it was all about borders, but not so much today. What a lot can change in just a few weeks!

It must be nice to be able to say whatever you want and never care about the consequences. You never have to lie awake worrying about Queenslanders who might get sick or die because of your bad decisions. It must be nice to be able to be that reckless and to take those risks for political gain. However, that is not leadership. Queenslanders see that that is not leadership. We even stood by our plan when those opposite sided with Pauline Hanson and Clive Palmer. I cannot say I am surprised, considering that half of their party executive are paid for by Clive Palmer. The second that New South

Wales closed its border with Victoria, those opposite went very quiet and the Prime Minister started talking about how important it was to keep the people of New South Wales safe. That was in stark contrast to the time when they did not care about keeping the people of Queensland safe.

It has been months since our last case of community transmission. Queenslanders have worked hard to ensure that we continue to have zero days. There is no way we would be in such an enviable position if we had listened to those opposite and opened our borders to the southern states earlier or, indeed, opened our borders to Victoria now. Thanks to our hard work, we were able to open our borders for tourists while ensuring they have stayed closed to hotspots and, in particular, to Victoria. We have backed in those decisions by ensuring there are strong penalties for breaching our orders and for lying. Police have turned people around at the border to keep Queenslanders safe. We have a plan to unite and recover, to invest in Queensland jobs and to keep Queenslanders safe.

We have continued to stand by our plan. We will not be bullied by those opposite into putting Queensland lives at risk, because we know that the first stage to our economic plan and our economic recovery is implementing our health plan and our health recovery.