




Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles
MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

Record of Proceedings, 16 July 2020

CORRECTIVE SERVICES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (12.52 pm): I rise to support the Corrective Services and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. In particular I would like to speak in support of amendments to be moved in consideration in detail to the Public Health Act 2005 and the Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011. These amendments are integral to Queensland's effort in limiting the spread of COVID-19 and strengthening our resourcing of the public health response.

We take the health of Queenslanders very seriously, and our public health directions are in place to limit any potential spread of COVID-19. Queenslanders are working hard in following restrictions and health advice, and we currently have only four active cases. We do not want to see all our hard work undone, and we are very serious about enforcing our public health directions. We are increasing the penalties for breaching any public health directions and implementing a penalty of six months imprisonment. A jail term can be imposed by a court and will only be used in the most serious of breaches. Currently, the penalty is a maximum of a \$13,345 fine. It is very important that people comply with public health directions and do not provide false or misleading information on their border declaration pass or they could face heavy fines or even now a jail term.

The amendments also include allowing the Chief Health Officer to delegate some of her emergency powers under the Public Health Act 2005 to the Deputy Chief Health Officer and other suitably qualified medical practitioners employed by government or a health service. As we all know, Queensland's Chief Health Officer, Dr Jeannette Young, has been working tirelessly since the start of this pandemic in January in what is a very demanding role. On 29 January 2020 a public health emergency was declared under the Public Health Act for COVID-19. On 19 March 2020 the Public Health Act was amended to include powers for the Chief Health Officer to make public health directions to assist in containing or to respond to the spread of COVID-19 in the community.

Since then, the Chief Health Officer has made over 60 public health directions, considered many individual requests for exemptions to the public health directions, approved plans and checklists, and declared numerous COVID hotspots. This amendment will allow Queensland's Chief Health Officer to share her considerable workload during the pandemic response with suitably qualified medical practitioners.

An amendment will also be made to enable Queensland's contact tracing officers to assist Victoria or other jurisdictions that might experience a COVID-19 outbreak if required. Queensland is currently in a good position and we are proud to be able to help Victoria respond to their COVID-19 emergency. We have already deployed 27 nurses to Victoria to assist with testing, with another 13 to be deployed soon. The changes proposed here will increase the number of staff able to help other states deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. I commend the bill and these proposed amendments to the House.