



Speech By  
**Hon. Yvette D'Ath**


**MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE**

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Record of Proceedings, 3 December 2020

**PUBLIC HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION (EXTENSION OF EXPIRING PROVISIONS) AMENDMENT BILL**

**Introduction**

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (12.11 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Justice and Other Legislation (COVID-19 Emergency Response) Amendment Act 2020, the Mental Health Act 2016, the Public Health Act 2005 and the Public Health and Other Legislation (Public Health Emergency) Amendment Act 2020 for particular purposes. I table the bill, the explanatory notes and a statement of compatibility with human rights. I nominate the Health and Environment Committee to consider the bill.

*Tabled paper:* Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2020 [338](#).

*Tabled paper:* Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2020, explanatory notes [339](#).

*Tabled paper:* Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2020, statement of compatibility with human rights [340](#).

As we all know, COVID-19 has sparked an unprecedented global health crisis. As of 3 December, Johns Hopkins University reported more than 64 million cases of COVID-19 worldwide. This number continues to grow, with over half a million people now contracting the virus each day.

The Palaszczuk government has been a global leader in the health response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are the envy of the world. A large part of our success can be attributed to our Chief Health Officer, Dr Jeannette Young. By following Dr Young's advice, and giving her the emergency powers she needed, the Palaszczuk government has been able to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in a swift and decisive manner. If we did not provide emergency powers to the Chief Health Officer to issue directions to limit, and respond to, the spread of COVID-19, I have no doubt that many more Queenslanders would have contracted the virus.

If COVID-19 ran riot in Queensland, like it has elsewhere in the world, we would have risked our hospital system being overrun and overwhelmed. We have seen this happen in other parts of the world such as Europe, North America and Africa. Only days ago, the Governor of California, Gavin Newsom, warned that California's health system was being overrun by COVID-19 cases, with California projected to run out of available ICU beds before Christmas Eve. The fact that this can happen in a place like California—which, if it were an independent nation, would have the fifth largest economy in the world—demonstrates that we should never take Queensland's success in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic for granted.

In stark contrast to the carnage unfolding across the world, Queensland now has eight active COVID-19 cases. We have been able to flatten the COVID curve because of the rapid response undertaken by the Palaszczuk government, Queensland Health and other government agencies to limit and contain the spread of the virus. We saw this firsthand with the containment of the outbreaks in the south of Brisbane and Ipswich.

Even though we continue to have more and more days go by without community transmission and restrictions continue to ease, we must not become complacent or think that the pandemic is over. Our Chief Health Officer continues to carefully consider the public health measures required to ensure that people returning from interstate hotspots or overseas do not present a risk to the community. Measures such as hotel quarantine are so important in allowing people to return to Queensland in a way that does not put the community at risk.

Throughout 2020, the Legislative Assembly passed several pieces of legislation to amend the Public Health Act and the Mental Health Act to support the Palaszczuk government's response to COVID-19. Due to the rapidly evolving situation, amendments were made either through urgent bills or amendments during consideration in detail. Sunset clauses were included so that the amendments were not permanent and would expire after a set date—generally 12 months after commencement.

This bill will allow the current legislative response measures implemented by the Palaszczuk government to continue for a further six months—until 30 September 2021. The bill will continue the amendments made by the Public Health and Other Legislation (Public Health Emergency) Amendment Act 2020. These provisions give emergency powers to the Chief Health Officer and emergency officers to make directions to limit, and respond to, the spread of COVID-19 in Queensland. These powers have been critical to the success of the Palaszczuk government's health response as they allow for the implementation of requirements to restrict the movement of people and for people to enter hotel quarantine.

The bill will also continue other amendments made to the Public Health Act to require people to pay the costs of their hotel quarantine and also allow the Governor in Council to extend a declared public health emergency for up to 90 days. The bill provides for the continuation of the amendments to the Mental Health Act. These provisions allow for an authorised mental health service to be declared through an expedited process—that is, without gazettal—and to allow mental health patients to be granted leave to comply with public health directions.

Given the current risks, we must continue to exercise caution, remain vigilant and respond quickly to any emerging risks of COVID-19 entering and spreading through Queensland. The extension of the current legislative framework will allow us to do that. As many will be aware, there has been significant news coverage of the development of a vaccine and the potential dates these vaccines may become available. Queensland Health will monitor any progress made in the development of a vaccine and review its public health measures as a vaccine becomes available across Queensland, Australia and internationally.

I would like to thank all of the staff in Queensland Health, particularly the Director-General, Dr John Wakefield, and the Chief Health Officer, Dr Jeannette Young, for their fantastic leadership as part of Queensland's health response to COVID-19. Everyone has worked tirelessly throughout 2020 to keep Queenslanders safe and allow our businesses to reopen in a COVID-safe way.

I would also like to thank all Queenslanders for their efforts—listening to the public health advice, taking action to make Queensland safe by washing their hands, wearing masks and practising social distancing where appropriate to do so. These measures have been critical to the success of our health response and have allowed our economy to reopen and recover quicker than many other parts of the world—some of which have been required to enforce lengthy lockdowns on multiple occasions. I commend the bill to the House.

### **First Reading**

**Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (12.17 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

### **Referral to Health and Environment Committee**

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mrs Gerber): In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Health and Environment Committee.