




Speech By  
**Aaron Harper**

**MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA**

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Record of Proceedings, 1 September 2021

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

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (6.39 pm): I rise to support the Public Health and Other Legislation (Further Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2021. Firstly, I want to thank the chair and the members of the Economics and Governance Committee for the work they have done in undertaking that report. This sort of bill would normally be for the health committee to consider, but we were very busy dealing with other bills. I say thanks very much for a good report and its commonsense points as to why we need the extension.

I will pick up on one point of the member for Ninderry. He said the Premier failed to convince the public. I do not know where he was in 2020 regarding the state election, but I am pretty sure the public resoundingly put faith in the Premier and were convinced that we are keeping Queenslanders safe by listening to the health advice. I am not sure where he was.

As we know, in January 2020 a public health emergency was declared under section 319 of the Public Health Act due to the outbreak of COVID-19 in China. Fast-forward 18 months and the numbers are stark, especially in New South Wales, who are struggling to contain the delta virus as they enter their third month of lockdown. That is in stark contrast to the way we have handled this global pandemic here in Queensland. The Chief Health Officer must be applauded for the way the government has handled this. Using the Indooroopilly cluster as an example, we managed to get on top of that in eight days compared to what is going on in other states. That, again, comes down to the confidence of the people of Queensland to follow the advice of the government and the Chief Health Officer. We thank Dr Jeannette Young. We cannot thank her enough for what she has done in the last 18 months. We can all hold our heads high after following her.

As at 1 February 2021 the World Health Organization reported 102 million people with coronavirus—that has almost doubled—and now we have four million deaths globally. The World Health Organization talks about it being closer to 10 million; that is the reality of it. Australia had experienced a far lesser burden, although other states are in the midst of it now, than other countries until delta came along. In Queensland as at the end of the month, there were 1,980 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with seven deaths related to Queensland residents. In New South Wales as at today there have been over 28,000 cases and over 150 deaths. In Australia, there has been a total of 56,000 cases with over a thousand deaths, and the WHO reports 216 million cases around the world.

We have to take this seriously. We have to have the right provisions in place. We have to use common sense and apply the science. Of course, the only way we are going to navigate our way out of this is with vaccines. I was really pleased to see the Townsville numbers today: 79,000 people in Townsville have had their vaccination, and I see the member for Townsville in the chamber. That is fantastic. The big vaccine hub we have in place there is working. The message is getting out in North Queensland, and they had to go into lockdown as well.

I applaud the government. I note in the report, for the benefit of the member for Logan, the QNMU endorsed the regional quarantine facility that is to be built similar to Howard Springs. The Labor government of this state is doing it. It is going alone and doing that to ensure we can quarantine people

safely. The feds had the opportunity to join us over a year ago on that, but they did not listen. They did not listen, they have failed in the supply and they have failed, as have other governments, by not acting early when there is an outbreak. That is a tragedy for the economic impact applied and the mental health of people. I have family in Sydney. It is just incredibly testing for them to be locked in their house with five kids. I do not know how they are doing it, but hats off to them.

I have to take up some of the points of the member for Whitsunday. She says that we were scaremongering and that we were drunk on power. What was the member for Whitsunday thinking? We have applied good common sense, we have applied science and we are listening to the Chief Health Officer. That contribution was disgraceful. The LNP need to get behind what we are doing on this side of the House by listening to the health advice.

**Ms Bates:** We are supporting the bill.

**Mr HARPER:** I can hear the member for Mudgeeraba interjecting as she normally does.

**Ms Bates:** We are supporting the bill.

**Mr HARPER:** If we had listened to the LNP—

**Ms Bates:** Are you aware we are supporting the bill?

**Mr HARPER:** I take the interjection, because if we had listened to that lot opposite, we would still be in lockdown. They wanted to open the border 64 times. Good grief!

In conclusion, we will continue to rely on the science. I am glad that the Premier is asking about the Doherty institute in relation to vaccine extensions; that was relied upon—the TGA approving from 12- to 18-year-olds. Of course, more clinical trials will happen and we will listen to the science. That is what we do. Queensland is doing a great job. We continue to do a great job by applying these extensions. I commend the bill to the House.