



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

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

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (12.05 pm): This afternoon, I am speaking to the Public Health and Other Legislation (Further Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2021. At the outset I wish to thank all Queenslanders—indeed, all Australians. Our success in dealing with this pandemic is not because of a politician, it is not because of a senior health bureaucrat; it is because of the sacrifices that each individual Queenslander has made. I want to add that our frontline health staff have been at the front line of addressing this pandemic throughout the past 18 months.

When this legislation was first brought to the House 18 months ago we were in a very different world. We did not know what we were really facing. We needed to quickly act to ensure that we controlled the outbreak of COVID in Australia. We thank the federal government, Scott Morrison and his team for quickly closing the international borders and ensuring we were able to manage the rate of COVID outbreaks within this state and nation. We also supported these laws because we needed to allow time for the development of vaccines, which again have been successfully created and are being rolled out. We also supported this legislation because we needed the time to come up with a path out of this pandemic. Now we are well on the path to addressing some of those.

Unfortunately, because of the mixed messages, especially of those opposite, there has been confusion, particularly around vaccinations. Our state is languishing at the bottom in terms of rolling out the vaccination not because of supply but because of the confusion and the concern created by the comments of the Premier. Because of the comments made by this Premier this week, we also now have confusion around our path out of the pandemic. When national cabinet signed up to an agreement there was a clear path out—that is, when vaccination rates got to 70 per cent and 80 per cent we would see changes that would bring relief, particularly for our small business operators, our tourism operators and mums and dads who have kids in schools across the state. All of those plans have now been thrown into confusion because of the comments of this government. I draw the House's attention to a quote of the LNP members of the Economics and Governance Committee in their statement of reservation in the report—

Politics has no place in pandemics and a clear and defined pathway to deal with what we all recognise is a serious public health crisis is essential to take this great State forward.

I repeat: politics has no place.

We will be moving—and I thank the shadow minister for health—a number of very important amendments. Yes, we need to extend these laws, but not to April next year. How about we extend them to December this year? That allows this state the time to address our lagging vaccination rates. Let's get those vaccinations happening. I have had my double shot. I call on everyone in Glass House and across Queensland to do the same. Let's get it done. It also allows plenty of time for this state to sign up to the national agreement on our pathway out of this pandemic. I support that amendment that will be moved by the shadow minister for health.

The other is to introduce an amendment which would see the expert health advice received by the state government, which is used as the rationale for implementing public health directions, publicly released on the Queensland Health website. Again this week we have seen hypocrisy, inconsistency and a lack of compassion. What really gets the people of Glass House and the people of Queensland is when they are treated like fools and not told why these decisions are being made. Why can Queenslanders not come back to Queensland when sporting entourages and their families are allowed to come into Queensland? The inconsistency is what is galling Queenslanders. By supporting the amendments of the shadow minister for health we will have the transparency that this state needs. People need to see the expert health advice. I support the amendments to be moved by the shadow minister for health.