




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

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

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (4.27 pm): I rise to address the public health and other legislation bill as a voice for the thousands of struggling small and family businesses across Queensland that have been abandoned by the state government in their hour of need. At the moment the financial burden of public health decisions like hard border closures is falling on small businesses and their employees. That is not good enough. Dealing with the COVID crisis should be a shared responsibility and the state government has not been upholding their side of the bargain.

With small and family businesses facing a crisis of which many will not survive, it is disappointing that the cries for help from small and family businesses have been largely ignored by the state government. I acknowledge that after months of advocacy from CCIQ, business owners, employees, lobby groups—

Government members interjected.

Mr MICKELBERG: I hear the chirping from those opposite. They do not like the truth. After months of advocacy from CCIQ, business owners, employees, lobby groups and the opposition, the government finally caved in and provided some financial grants to some businesses, but considerably more needs to be done.

There are over 450,000 small and family businesses in Queensland and many of those 450,000 businesses are struggling to pay their bills, with little or no income. Small business owners are racking up more and more debt just so they can keep going and keep their staff employed and in a job. Small and family businesses need greater certainty in the uncertain times they are currently facing. They are not getting that from the state government.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart): Pause the clock. Members, there is far too much noise in the chamber. I am going to start warning members momentarily. This is your final warning.

Mr MICKELBERG: What we heard today from the Premier, through her statements in question time, further eroded business confidence. Again, we see the Premier making misleading statements that are deliberately designed to inflame fear and statements that will force more businesses to make the difficult decision to close their doors for good.

This bill should contain provisions that require any expert health advice that the Premier and others so frequently rely on to be published so that all Queenslanders can understand the basis for public health decisions that are having such a considerable impact on all aspects of Queensland society. Such a course of action would allow businesses to develop a plan so they are better equipped to react to future public health directives which will inevitably impact their business viability.

Queensland small and family business owners deserve greater transparency from the state government. Small businesses and their employees deserve changes to public health directives to be communicated more clearly than they have been to date. It is not good enough that public health

directives that implement a lockdown for more than three million Queenslanders are not publicly available at the time the lockdown comes into effect. For the more than 335,000 small and family businesses that will be shut down in a lockdown, the public health directive is not available for them to read in advance of the time the lockdown comes into effect. That is simply not good enough.

We are 18 months into this pandemic response, yet the state government still cannot get the basics right. Small business owners must contend with a seemingly well-intentioned but ineffectual Minister for Small Business, who on webinars recently cannot answer simple questions about what changed public health directives mean for small businesses, and she either cannot or will not deliver timely support for small and family businesses.

The state government seem more concerned about spin and the Premier's Twitter account than they are about ensuring that small businesses have the information they need to ensure that they can comply with public health orders. Queenslanders deserve better than that. Small and family businesses, their employees and Queenslanders everywhere deserve better than the lack of transparency, the lack of support and the inconsistencies that have been on display over the last 18 months. Queensland small and family businesses need certainty and support as we navigate these uncharted waters. They need actions, not words.

I call on the state government to support the opposition's amendments today which will seek to ensure that there is adequate oversight in relation to future extensions to these onerous but necessary provisions and which will seek to ensure that public and business confidence is improved by releasing expert health advice for the benefit of all Queenslanders.