




Speech By
Brent Mickelberg

MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

Record of Proceedings, 13 October 2021

MOTION

Coronavirus, Palaszczuk Labor Government Modelling

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (5.22 pm): Across Queensland small and family businesses are at breaking point. The burden of months of uncertainty and the feeling that they have been abandoned increasingly weighs on them and their employees. Thousands of small and family business owners simply do not know whether they can carry on.

For small and family businesses the last 18 months have been a marathon—a marathon of sleepless nights agonising about how to keep their employees in a job, a marathon of worrying about where the cash is going to come from to pay the next bill, a marathon run on the shifting sands of conflicting information and ambiguous messaging from the Premier and her minions, a marathon run without a clearly defined finish line.

Just when small and family businesses felt like they could see the finish line, the Premier has shifted it again. The Premier has shifted the finish line time and time again, and Queensland's small and family businesses are left running a race with no end in sight. Every time the Premier shifts the finish line another small and family business gives up the fight.

What Queensland's small and family businesses need more than anything is certainty. It is something that the LNP have been calling for for the duration of the pandemic—certainty so that small and family businesses can plan and budget, certainty so that small and family businesses have hope and better days to look forward to. It is Queensland small and family businesses and their employees who have been left to carry the financial burden of public health decisions which are beyond their control.

Yesterday the Treasurer came into the parliament and we heard him wax lyrical about how well the Queensland economy is performing. We heard about job vacancies and dwelling approvals. The Treasurer spoke about business confidence. While it is true that some Queensland businesses are experiencing good conditions, it is also true that many are struggling and many are failing. In fact, Queensland has the highest rate of business insolvency per capita in the nation. Every time the Treasurer comes in here and pretends that everything is great for Queensland's small and family businesses, it is a slap in the face for Australian cafe owners in Currumbin, for music venues in Mooloolaba, for tour operators in Townsville and for publicans in Port Douglas. To pretend that Queensland is completely open for business is a nonsense.

Aside from the state border, a host of different businesses are subject to onerous restrictions, the result of which is frequently an inability to even cover their costs. In the recent CCIQ Pulse Survey, 41 per cent of business owners indicated that in the last 12 months they had contributed personal funds into the business due to COVID disruptions—41 per cent of business owners took an average of \$111,000 from their own family's pocket to help keep their employees in a job and to keep the doors open. Do not get me wrong: businesses are grateful that they are not in lockdown, but to suggest that Queensland businesses are thriving is a joke.

What Queensland small and family businesses crave more than anything is certainty—certainty so they can make decisions to invest, trade and grow, certainty that the state government has gone out of their way to avoid providing them. The state government have done their own modelling on opening up at different vaccinations rates, but they will not release it. The state government have health advice that is the justification for the onerous restrictions on small and family businesses, but they will not release it. The state government will not release information that would better inform Queenslanders and ease their burden. It is not good enough, and Queensland small and family businesses deserve better.

It is not just the LNP calling on the government to provide more certainty for small and family businesses. The voice of Queensland business the CCIQ have said, 'Every day of ongoing uncertainty and a lack of commitment to a nationally consistent plan to allow Queensland businesses to recover from economic impacts of COVID means businesses are less confident in the market, suffering greater losses and will take longer to recover.' CCIQ have said that the longer Queensland's small and family businesses wait for the state government to provide certainty and a pathway out of the pandemic, the less likely it is that they will recover and more will fail.

Amanda Rohan from the CCIQ recently said, 'As part of the plan for reopening, businesses need to know what each stage looks like in relation to restrictions, vaccination targets, requirements for businesses on compliance, testing, isolation and contract tracing.' We are watching on as businesses in other states are given clearly communicated plans including what is required of them, their staff and their customers as conditions develop. Queensland businesses and the CCIQ have had no consultation from the state government about a comparable plan for Queensland businesses.

It is time for the Premier to provide Queenslanders with hope and certainty. The Premier needs to stop treating Queenslanders with contempt and release all modelling in relation to Queensland's COVID-19 response. Queensland's small and family businesses deserve a clearly articulated pathway out of the pandemic. I call on those opposite to support the motion before the House.

(Time expired)