




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR BANCROFT

Record of Proceedings, 2 September 2021

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT

Coronavirus

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (2.42 pm): I rise to discuss the implications of what the federal minister Karen Andrews, a Queenslander, has said and that is that the federal government is of the view that Queensland should be open. Let's unpack the message behind that. The message is they want us to open our borders. They want us to let the virus in. They want us to bring it in and let it rip. Their message is that Queenslanders should learn to live with it. The point is that we are not. Why should we? All we have heard recently is that it cannot be controlled. Yes, it can be. We are one of the only places in the world to crush a delta outbreak in eight days. We should be proud of that. It can be summed up by what Mark McGowan in Western Australia has said. I think he nailed it when he said, 'The federal government is on a mission to bring COVID into this state.' That may be overly dramatic, but he nailed it.

These are the implications of what the federal government is thinking and saying about us here in Queensland. There are three things. Firstly, it is very clear if we look at the evidence that the LNP want to undermine our strong borders here in Queensland. They want to dilute the health response that has kept us safe, and that includes people within this chamber. Let's look at some examples of that. They called for the border to be opened 64 times. The member for Burleigh gave us the great advantage of putting up a billboard calling for the same.

I have a question about what the member for Currumbin was saying today. Is she calling for the borders to be opened? She is calling for the border to be opened to parts of New South Wales that are quite close to the location of cases of the virus. I think there are some mixed messages there. Once again, I think that is undermining the message we are sending about strong borders, and that ties in well with what Karen Andrews was saying. Our strong border response has kept us safe and the LNP want to weaken that.

We also know that the LNP want to dilute our strong health response. We have heard them describe our hardworking staff as 'punch-drunk bureaucrats' or say that our response is like 'pulling a doona over our head' or 'living in a cave'. Today we heard the member for Mudgeeraba say that we should be transitioning away from restrictions. Once again, this is all about undermining our strong health response. If we look at the evidence and the examples, we see that the LNP want to wind back our strong health response and open our borders. 'Open it up!', they say. 'Let it rip.' They will not say it directly but they will hint at it all the time.