




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BANCROFT

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Queensland Border Restrictions

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (2.20 pm): It is always interesting to follow the member for Everton. On reflection, you can rely on the LNP to talk down the Queensland Public Service every single time. It is concerning to hear that the LNP is not committed to the strong borders that keep us safe. Queenslanders are very concerned that the LNP want to open us up to New South Wales, which is undergoing a massive outbreak of COVID-19, but the LNP will not say it out loud. When they talk about our borders they will use code or call for things that undermine our border measures. Let's look at their track record. We heard from the Premier today that the Leader of the Opposition was asked five times about Queensland's border measures and he would not say if he supported them. He refused to take a stance on one of the things that has kept us safe.

What else is the LNP doing to undermine our border response? Remember that the federal member, Minister Karen Andrews, said, 'The federal government is of the view that Queensland should be open.' Remember that the member for Mudgeeraba said in the last sitting week that we should be transitioning away from restrictions. As for the member for Currumbin, I think the member has always been ambivalent about keeping strong borders, and we understand the reasons why, but she should not be shy about saying what she wants. She would clearly be happy to open part of Queensland to New South Wales: 'Here, I will even help you over the border. That is easy to do.' The member for Burleigh was not even subtle about it. He put up a billboard calling for the borders to be open. I admire him for that; at least he is honest about it. What else has the LNP said as it has attempted to weaken our borders?

We have heard the LNP describe our hardworking staff as punch-drunk bureaucrats. It is interesting that the Leader of the Opposition has said, 'We always support frontline staff,' yet once again they always take the chance to run them down if they can, calling them punch-drunk bureaucrats. They have said that our COVID response is like living in a cave or pulling a doona over our head. The gold standard of their stance is when, before the election, they called for the border to be opened 64 times—64 times. They have never denied it. Their message is that Queenslanders should learn to live with it. They are speaking in code. They do not want us to fight the virus but they will not say it directly. They want us to open up the border to this uncontrolled outbreak in New South Wales.

Mr McCallum: Let it rip.

Mr WHITING: They want to open up the borders and let the virus in. I take the interjection: bring it in and let it rip. Why would the LNP want to emulate the 'gold standard' of New South Wales in combating this virus? Their ICUs are flooded. People are finding it difficult to access hospitals of any kind for medical treatment. The morale of their paramedics is at an all-time low, and I have heard that from a paramedic who is living in our area. I say to the member for Mudgeeraba that I talk to paramedics, and the morale here in Queensland is a lot higher than it is in New South Wales. We have heard from the Premier today that New South Wales has suffered 38,000 infections and close to 200 deaths, but in Queensland we are keeping the delta variant at bay and we are doing an outstanding job.

As I said, the Leader of the Opposition likes to talk down our health department, but look at what we have achieved in the last 19 months. We are unique in the world: we crushed a delta outbreak in eight days. Our strong border response has helped keep us safe and the LNP wants to weaken that. It wants to undermine that. The evidence and examples show the LNP wants to wind back our strong health response and open up our borders. They will not say it directly but they hint at it all the time.

We know that many do not believe in the science of climate change. Maybe they do not believe in medical science that much either. We know George Christensen thinks that taking a horse wormer kills COVID. You could not make this stuff up. I think it is best summed up by Premier Mark McGowan in Western Australia. I think he nailed it when he said, 'The federal government is on a mission to bring COVID into this state.' You have to wonder what the state LNP is up to. I say to the LNP that Queenslanders see through you. They know the code you are speaking. They do not support what you are saying and what you are doing. They know you want to overturn our strong border response. They do not want the economic destruction and mass unemployment that flows from an uncontrolled delta outbreak.