




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NINDERRY

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

 **Mr PURDIE** (Ninderry—LNP) (6.34 pm): As a member of the Economics and Governance Committee, I rise to speak to the Public Health and Other Legislation (Further Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2021. This bill continues the amendments to the Public Health Act that gives emergency and extraordinary powers to the Chief Health Officer in Queensland and proposes these powers be extended beyond the current expiry date of September 2021 to April 2022. This bill is the fourth subsequent bill presented to parliament that seeks to extend the date on which these emergency powers will expire. By the time April 2022 comes around, Queenslanders will have been subjected to the snap enactment of emergency provisions for two years and two months.

During our examination of the bill, the committee considered 588 submissions. The majority of the submitters to the committee were individuals who raised concerns with lockdown restrictions, mask mandates and social and economic impacts, particularly when just a few cases of COVID-19 were being reported in the community. Yesterday, we woke to the news that just one week into a pause on hotel quarantine admissions, NRL players and cricketers have yet again been allowed into Queensland while Queenslanders are being evicted. A growing public sentiment which is alert to the unfairness of elite sporting teams and others being able to travel, restrictions on community sport and the inconsistent approach to the granting of exemptions all leave the community sceptical about the motivations for certain decisions.

Together with my LNP colleagues, I am concerned the government has been unable to clearly communicate public health measures and has not been transparent with the rationale of enforcement or easing of restrictions. Transparency is vital to achieve confidence in leadership. The state government must release the medical advice which it receives as the basis for enforcing restrictions. Queenslanders are entitled to this information. Without it, we are forced to sit back and take any decision on the chin with little warning and little context. This uncertainty breeds anxiety.

To that end, it is imperative the government publicly release what contingency plans have been made in preparation for a COVID-19 outbreak in Queensland based on our current vaccination rates. My office has been inundated with inquiries from constituents who claim the government is operating in a social and economic vacuum. I will continue to put pressure on the Labor government to engage consistently with stakeholders across different industries and geographies to refine and update the health directives in order to develop appropriate rules.

This bill was a perfect opportunity to introduce some much needed fiscal support packages for small and family businesses that would have added to the range of measures to support the Queensland economy. It failed to do so. While the Premier has agreed to the national plan to transition Australia's national COVID-19 response and limit lockdowns, she has failed to convince the public that her government is genuinely committed to this approach. When introducing the bill, the Minister for Health justified the extension of the bill's expiration date by saying—

This will allow time for Queensland Health to assess the effectiveness of the vaccine rollout and what this may mean for the COVID-19 response.

I find it interesting that the litmus test is vaccination rates when Queensland's vaccination rates are the second lowest in the country. Extraordinary measures are called for in extraordinary times. However, it is important that Queenslanders can trust—

Government members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Lui): Order!

Mr PURDIE: Thanks for your protection, Madam Deputy Speaker. However, it is important that Queenslanders can trust in and understand a roadmap to normality. The opposition proposes the following: that the expiry date of the Public Health and Other Legislation (Further Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2021 be set at Friday, 10 December 2021 instead of April 2022; that expert health advice received by the state government is shared publicly; and that the state government must identify a clear road map away from COVID-19 restrictions and set a target date to reach 80 per cent of the population being fully vaccinated.

However, this is with strong concerns about the crippling effect ad hoc lockdowns have on small and family business communities, in particular the tourism sector. A sensible risk strategy must be communicated to Queenslanders that quantifies appropriate measures in accordance with the level of risk. One rule for sporting teams and entertainers and another for everyone else does not pass the pub test. I commend the passing of these key amendments to the bill and I commend the bill to the House.