




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Coronavirus, Border Restrictions

 **Mr JANETZKI** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (2.45 pm): Yesterday afternoon I was listening to Steve Austin's program on ABC Radio. On that program he had a woman called Meredith who had phoned in. Meredith is a retiree who lives in the Tweed with her husband, David. What she had to tell listeners to that program yesterday afternoon is another reminder of so many challenges facing those Queenslanders stuck across the border. In that interview yesterday afternoon she talked about 50 families they are helping support right now; that is, 50 Queensland families who are in New South Wales desperate to return home—who are at risk of losing their jobs and who are at risk of having their homes in Queensland taken from them if they cannot meet their rental payments. All the while, these people are bearing costs in New South Wales and here.

It was a reminder of the pejorative term that the Treasurer used in here a couple of weeks ago with regard to elected officials who were raising questions about borders and businesses. The pejorative term that the Treasurer used should not be limited to just elected representative. There is a range of people asking serious questions about borders and businesses right across the spectrum. We have the Human Rights Commission now talking about the favourability shown to celebrities over the rights of citizens and whether the disproportionate nature of some of the actions are out of step with the risks. It is business leaders, it is captains of industry, it is lobby groups that simply want this government to make a stand and commit to the national plan.

It is tourism operators in Cairns like Perry, who the Leader of the Opposition mentioned, who was weeping for his livelihood. I know he has been on the national media again today. All tourism operators suffered from a 30 per cent drop in international tourism last year. Then in the high season in June-July this year the borders to New South Wales and Victoria shut. These tourism operators are simply crying out for a plan—some idea from the government as to how businesses will prepare with Christmas just ahead. It is also a reminder that lifeline has reported a 19 per cent increase this year in people reaching out seeking help. The challenges are real and people are asking questions.

When I speak of mental health challenges, I acknowledge a deeply-respected family in the Darling Downs living with these border challenges right now. John has reached out and spoken to me a couple of times. His daughter, wife, four grandchildren and son-in-law have been given advice from Queensland Health about travelling from South Australia. The advice to them from Queensland Health was that if they did not stop overnight in western New South Wales they could cross the border into Queensland. John's daughter did not just take this first advice. She called not once, she called not twice but she called three times for advice. They got to the border at Cunnamulla and they were stopped from crossing the border. This family is now trapped at Moree and they have been there for over three weeks.

Mr Krause: It's un-Australian.

Mr JANETZKI: I will take that interjection. It is un-Australian. It is unacceptable for so many of our people not to have any answers as to when they can cross the borders. Where is the compassion?

It is not just the words that are spoken or the decisions that are being made; it is the tone of the language that we are now hearing from the government. When the Premier says: 'Are you going to go to India?' it is not just the words that are offensive but the tone in which they are delivered. It is the tone and the sarcasm with which those words are delivered that is making those people across the border even more upset. It is adding to their deep concern. Where is the compassion from this government?

Now is the time for this government to stop playing petty politics when our vaccination rates are lagging, to stop using straw man arguments, to stop making statements without modelling. It is time to stop the inconsistencies in the exemption unit. It is time for the government to show some compassion, some clarity and consistency of message. It is time for this government to show us a pathway out of the pandemic.