




Speech By  
**Hon. Grace Grace**

**MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL**

---

Record of Proceedings, 17 November 2021

**JUSTICE LEGISLATION (COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE—PERMANENCY)  
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (2.06 pm): I rise to support the bill. It has been an unbelievable 22 months since we declared a health emergency back in January 2020. We were one of the first states to do so. Queensland has done an absolutely world-class, remarkable job managing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. We had to move quickly at times and decisively to put in place measures not only to keep Queenslanders safe but to obviously ensure that courts and the world continued to tick over. We implemented an emergency response, and we are now looking at making some of those learnings permanent.

When I became Minister for Education I never would have thought we would see a complete change to the way schools operate. We learned a lot through those changes. Technology allowed us to deliver a way of learning we had never seen before. We are even now looking at the School of Distance Education to see how we can improve delivery for isolated children and other students and what technology we can use to make that a better environment for our students. I take this opportunity again to thank all of our hardworking school staff and students for adapting to these changes and implementing ongoing remote learning when it was required.

Thank goodness that in Queensland we experienced nothing like some of the remote learning time frames of the southern states, particularly New South Wales, Victoria and the ACT, for that matter, where I believe all of term 3 last year was basically through remote learning. That is an incredible burden on any education system. What learnings we get out of this and how to implement them permanently is the way to go. We have had a lot of learnings from COVID at the same time, and technology also allowed businesses to continue to operate smoothly during the pandemic.

One of the temporary measures we put in place was to allow important documents to be signed electronically. I think we have learned that that is a much more efficient and better way of doing it. I think that making those provisions permanent now just makes sense. Importantly, it helped reduce the spread of the virus in our communities because people were not able to have face-to-face contact. It allowed court documents to be filed in a way that we really had not thought of.

We were very innovative and we moved quickly. For example, people could get their mortgage documents signed electronically rather than meeting their solicitors in person. This not only limited the number of people being physically present; it also made it more convenient for individuals and businesses. That is why making those measures that have worked extremely well permanent makes so much sense. I think the committee found that and consequently recommended that the bill be passed.

The bill will permanently implement these temporary measures and modernise the way important legal documents are created and signed. I think that is a step in the right direction. The bill will also streamline domestic and family violence proceedings. For instance, it will allow these matters to be heard by video or audio link, which is an excellent step in the right direction, and will allow the electronic

filing of documents where approved by the principal registrar. We know there are so many shades of a terrible colour when it comes to domestic violence. These victims and perpetrators find themselves in all kinds of situations. We have learnt that there is a better way of collecting and presenting evidence that protects the families and victims because the perpetrators are not there to make it even more difficult on the victims. This is an excellent step.

The bill will make this permanent. It recognises domestic and family violence and the effect of courts bringing the perpetrators and victims together. Allowing vulnerable Queenslanders to make documents or give evidence under oath from the comfort of their home or workplace using technology will further support those victims in what is already a stressful time. We have learnt that this is helping those in domestic and family violence situations, and that is a step in the right direction. Often things go unnoticed, but when there is a health pandemic—like we have been through—things like this are brought to the forefront and people think of different ways of addressing them and then make them permanent if they work. I commend the Attorney-General for doing that.

There is no doubt that businesses were hit by COVID. Those that adapted quickly and were innovative did well, particularly those in my electorate. Some of those restaurants with their takeaway menus were second to none. They adapted very quickly and were able to offer a bottle of wine with their takeaway. I remember the Premier and I ordered our takeaway lunch from the New Farm Deli, and I give a shout-out to Maria and Vince Anello who offer a fantastic product. During COVID they established a takeaway picnic lunch. The Premier and I both ordered one, and when we picked it up it came with a beautiful bottle of Italian wine as well.

**Mr Lister:** Grace, is that where you get the cannoli from?

**Ms GRACE:** No, I actually get the cannoli from Gerbino's. The Gerbino's cannoli are absolutely fantastic. I will take that interjection from the member for Southern Downs, who I know loves a good cannoli. I remember that he brought me an Italian cookbook from Stanthorpe and his reward was a few cannoli from Gerbino's, which he absolutely enjoyed. They are very good, but the New Farm Deli has beautiful cannoli as well.

The Premier and I got our wine and it was a lovely way to do that. It will make a big difference to those businesses in my electorate when they can do that permanently—when customers can enjoy a takeaway meal and up to two bottles of wine. As I said last night, 18 of the 20 best restaurants are in the electorate of McConnel.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Ms GRACE:** This is according to the *Courier-Mail*. They were not my findings. Before everyone starts complaining, I know that a lot of you love dining and going out in the electorate of McConnel. I am sure these small changes will make those fantastic local businesses—

**Mr Boothman:** What is your favourite?

**Ms GRACE:** I will take that interjection. My favourite would have to be Tartufo, the Italian restaurant in Fortitude Valley. Tony and Gordana do a fantastic trade there. The Italian food at Tartufo is second to none, but there are so many. I cannot even mention how many great restaurants there are in my electorate. All of them are great and I urge all members to support them. If you do not want to dine in, you can get one of their takeaways and order a couple of bottles of wine. As I said, that helped them to keep their doors open. A lot of them innovated and, importantly, it kept Queenslanders in jobs. Now that we are open, you cannot book a restaurant in my electorate. Good luck trying to get in. They adapted and were innovative. These small steps assisted them, and it is good to see these steps are now permanent and are assisting them even further.

These are important measures to improve efficiency, and they make very good sense for both the individuals and the businesses. Michael and I would often order takeaway and buy one of their bottles at the same time. A lot of the time we had wine at home but we bought the wine to support the business during tough times.

Making this permanent is a step in the right direction. These changes make eminent sense. These are the things that you learn through dark clouds. The dark clouds of a world health COVID pandemic have shone some light on some old ways that we were doing things. This bill is all about taking those learnings and making them permanent. I commend the bill to the House.