




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

Record of Proceedings, 1 September 2021

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

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (6.55 pm): I listened carefully to the second reading speech of the Minister for Health. She mentioned a number of issues I would like to speak about. I am a member who represents a border constituency, with about 500 kilometres of frontage with New South Wales. Many of my communities have a common community with the towns on the other side. Those people who have an entitlement to cross the border—they are expected to be essential workers—should be able to do so but, because of the bungling and the lack of preparation of this government—

Mr Power: Stop attacking Gladys. She's already got so much on her plate.

Mr LISTER: I am not taking interjections, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Lui): Order, member for Logan.

Mr LISTER: I need to speak for those little people whose voice is not being heard. I heard the minister thank the retail workers who continue to stock our shelves. I ask her to bear in mind the retail worker at the Wallangarra General Store who on a number of occasions has been prevented from traversing the border, because the system is capricious. The police on the border are given the invidious task of having to decide who is essential and who is not. I have written at length to the government over these matters. Nothing has happened. I heard the minister say that we all acknowledge the pain and the distress caused. I ask the minister: why am I never consulted when it comes to border matters?

Government members: Ha, ha!

Mr LISTER: I represent communities that the minister and this government do not understand. This is a serious matter. I can see that this might enliven the humour of some of the—

Mr Power: Why don't you actually do something with the New South Wales government?

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, member for Logan!

Mr LISTER: The Labor government has consistently and systemically excluded not only me but also every other member who represents a constituency along the border, like my honourable friend the member for Mudgeeraba. She has border frontage with New South Wales. There is bungling and absurdity that comes up in the exemptions for essential workers that prevents them from being able to fulfil their intended role according to the Chief Health Officer. That is, for instance with agricultural workers, anyone who in any shape or form supports agriculture. That is what the Chief Health Officer said. Those people are being turned away because of the bungling and the lack of awareness about and understanding of country communities and border communities.

I heard the minister say that she really looked forward to hearing the debate to see what the opposition would do. I can tell her what the opposition would do: the opposition would have saved \$500,000 and not spent money on polling to assist its electoral chances. The government should listen

to the medical advice rather than to the pollsters, which is the obvious inference when the polling was put together and concealed by the government, because it would be damning if it were released.

We heard the minister say that she is ensuring the economic future for all Queenslanders. Those are empty words because, as I say again, on many occasions I have said in this House and I have written to the Premier saying that I should be consulted when the planning for border closures is being carried out so that my communities are represented, so that they know that when the decision is made it has taken into account their needs and interests. Every single time the border has been closed there has been a bungle which has resulted from the lack of consultation. It is entirely political that the Labor government never consults with LNP members who have been elected to represent border communities.

Finally, I say this to the minister: what about those many people who depend on ambulances and fire brigades that have to cross the border to reach them? When we put a six-tonne concrete barrier across a border—it does not matter what the law says—they will take 20 minutes longer to get to a heart attack or a fire. The people in my electorate and the people just on the other side of the border—our friends and cousins in New South Wales—are entitled to a government that understands their needs and does not sell them out just so the Premier can look good each morning at her morning press conference.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lister, adjourned.