




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

Record of Proceedings, 2 September 2021

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Queensland Border Restrictions

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (2.30 pm): I rise to speak about the communities in my electorate of Southern Downs along the border between Queensland and New South Wales. They along with many other Queenslanders are doing it tough at the moment because border closures make people's lives difficult. They make it hard to do business, they make it hard to get kids to school and all of those things. The difficulties for the electorate of Southern Downs particularly centre around the exemptions which the Chief Health Officer intends to apply for those who are essential workers who should be able to cross between Queensland and New South Wales so that essential business can go on—such as in agriculture, health care and those sorts of things. I have written to the Chief Health Officer concerning the exemptions for essential workers. I table my letter for the benefit of the House.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 30 August 2021, from the member for Southern Downs, Mr James Lister MP, to the Chief Health Officer, Dr Jeannette Young, titled 'Essential cross-border worker status: Police determinations at border crossings' [1336](#).

One of the difficulties with the current arrangements is that police on the frontline at the borders, who are doing it tough themselves, are in the invidious position where they have to make a final decision on whether someone is essential or not. Simply having a letter from one's employer and a completed pass to cross the border has been no guarantee for people who are genuinely essential—such as primary production workers, people in food and fuel businesses and so forth.

I have mentioned the Wallangarra General Store a number of times during the week. Its two owners and their staff member all live just over the border in New South Wales. That store is in Queensland. It is an essential service, selling fuel, gas and food, and all three of the staff are essential. The police on the beat are in the difficult position of having to say whether or not each staff member is indeed truly essential. They do not have the background on the business, nor should we expect them to. I have written to the Chief Health Officer to ask that the act of certifying that a staff member is essential should be ipso facto your proof of essentiality. The final decision should rest with the employer. I understand that there are some risks associated with entrusting the community with those decisions, but communities of mine along the border—in places like Killarney, Wallangarra, Stanthorpe, Texas, Goondiwindi and Talwood—are doing it very tough and experiencing pain.

We are talking about very sparsely populated areas where businesses always have and always will rely on markets and services on both sides. I ask the government to please take that into account and consult me and my border colleagues about the unique issues in each of our electorates. These issues may not be known to the people who are based in the city and are making many of these decisions about border closures. I do not object to the border closure. I just want it to work for my community.