




Speech By
Jennifer Howard

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

Record of Proceedings, 30 November 2021

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Growing Queensland Business Roadshow; Coronavirus, Vaccination

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (2.40 pm): It was my honour to represent the Palaszczuk government at the 2021 Growing Queensland Business Roadshow in Ipswich last week. The Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement recently said that the Palaszczuk government's Buy Queensland approach is unashamedly pro Queensland. That is what the Buy Queensland approach is all about—backing Queensland businesses all the way. We are doing this by buying local every time, supporting jobs for Queenslanders and boosting the state's economy through ensuring Queensland dollars circulate here.

There was a fantastic turnout at the Ipswich business roadshow, with more than 100 local business owners and representatives coming to the event. In fact, we had to expand the event due to the level of demand. I am a huge supporter of local businesses in Ipswich and I thank the minister for bringing this event into our city.

After the challenges that our local businesses have faced over the past two years in particular, it is great to be part of a Queensland Labor government that is backing local business through our Buy Queensland approach. Our Queensland business roadshows have been travelling across the state and, in addition to Ipswich, have visited Rockhampton, Bundaberg, Beenleigh, Toowoomba, Cairns and Morayfield. We also did a further two sessions in Townsville on Monday.

Businesses have been able to access a wealth of information through the roadshow session such as how to sign up for alerts that will let them know when contracts are up for tender in their fields; what the Queensland government's plans are for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games; and advice on how they can be a part of that Olympic journey and how to boost their businesses along the way. As at 18 November 2021, 2,435 supplier representatives had registered their interest in receiving updates on Olympic procurement. Our roadshows help strengthen Queensland's business environment. They do this by creating more resilient businesses that can weather economic storms like the COVID pandemic, creating jobs to keep Queenslanders working, and ensuring the future of workers and local businesses to secure the future of Queensland's economy.

The best way at the moment that we can strengthen Queensland's business community is by making sure we all get vaccinated. We have just heard an excellent contribution by the member for Greenslopes that really puts things into perspective when it comes to vaccination. Businesses need a high level of certainty that they can continue to operate without the fear of lockdowns or state border closures. By all of us getting vaccinated, we can bring back that certainty. Let's face it: lockdowns are bad for business, but we have to remember that for most of this pandemic lockdowns were the only weapon we had against outbreaks because we did not have the vaccine yet or because only a few of us were able to get it at the time. Fortunately, Queensland has not had to lock down for extended periods like New South Wales and Victoria, but in the times that we have had to small businesses have borne the brunt of those lockdowns. They have been forced to shut down and lose revenue. Staff were impacted by lost wages and reduced hours.

Over the past few weeks I and other MPs have had our email inboxes bombarded by people vehemently opposed to COVID vaccines. I doubt that many of these people have any idea about the real-world costs that businesses and workers have faced due to lockdowns or when having to shut down for deep cleaning due to a COVID case having visited their business premises. This is the world of uncertainty and disruption that people opposing the COVID vaccines want us to live in.

The fact that some federal and state MPs from the LNP, One Nation and the Palmer United Party back this strange world view shows that they are happy to put misinformed ideology above the needs of our local business owners and workers. We heard from the member for Greenslopes that 120,000 frontline health workers have lost their lives trying to save lives. The least we can do is get vaccinated. It is our pathway out of uncertainty and disruption. Getting vaccinated means that lockdowns can be a thing of the past—and masks too. Businesses can plan for the future. Workers can be sure that their jobs are secure. If you want to support local business owners and their employees, get vaccinated. If you want to support our frontline health workers, get vaccinated.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to opening our state's internal border when we hit 80 per cent full vaccination. We are doing this so that we can reunite families and allow interstate visitors into Queensland. We are getting ready for that and so are our businesses. It is great to see that in Queensland we are now over 76 per cent fully vaccinated. In the Ipswich LGA, 75.3 per cent are fully vaccinated. We are going to hit our target of 80 per cent and the majority of Queenslanders and businesses are looking forward to it.

(Time expired)