




Speech By
Joseph Kelly

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

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

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (4.47 pm): I am surprised the member for South Brisbane is not out the front dancing around with clowns again today and has taken the time to come in here and give the parliament the respect that it deserves. While the member for South Brisbane was outside dancing about with a bunch of clowns and accusing us in here of being zombies, in fact most of the people who were in this chamber yesterday were spending the time acknowledging the traditional owners and establishing a new tradition for this parliament and improving the institution that is our fine parliament. I want to continue to make a decent contribution to this parliament.

I support the Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill. I promised the people of Greenslopes that I would work with them and the Premier to keep Queenslanders safe and lead the recovery from COVID-19. This bill is an important part of keeping Queenslanders safe. The people have always been fundamentally important in keeping people in our state safe. They have done everything that they have been asked to do.

On a number of occasions I have bumped into Dr Jeannette Young around the place, as we all do from time to time. I have taken the opportunity, on behalf of the people of Greenslopes, to thank her for the great work that she is doing. Being the humble person that she is, she always responds to me, 'No, no, it is Queenslanders who have done the good job.' I think that it is certainly because people have trust in Dr Jeannette Young and trust in the systems that we have put in place that they have done what they need to do to keep Queenslanders safe.

I think the Premier has done an amazing job. She was the first in the country to act. She was the first to provide funding. She stuck to the course, no matter what. She always based her actions and decisions on the best available evidence based advice. Those opposite cannot always say that they have done a good job, 64 times calling for the border to be opened.

This bill really should be a no-brainer: we are where we are at because of the strong public health response. The recent lockdown that we endured here in Brisbane—and thankfully it was for only a few days—should have reminded us all that this disease can and will come back if we are not ever vigilant. Sadly, we have seen that happen overseas on many occasions.

A clue to the fact that the bill is a no-brainer is the diversity of the groups that support its objectives. Deputy Speaker, you would not be surprised, as I was not, that the QNMU, the AMAQ, the Lung Foundation, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, Health Consumers Queensland and the Public Health Association of Australia support the bill. However, groups such as the Queensland Hotels Association, the Queensland Tourism Industry Council and the Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland also support the bill. Even though we all know they have members who have been negatively impacted by the sorts of provisions that have been put in place, they have seen the sense in supporting this bill. In the report the Queensland police stated clearly that without

these powers they could not have done what was needed to keep Queenslanders safe. I really loved what some individual submitters said and I would like to read out a lot of their comments, but I will restrict myself to the comments of Michael Kiss, because I think he nailed it. He said—

Definitely extend the powers. Dr Young has been amazing. In Jeanette, we trust!

I think that summarises it.

Those objecting to the bill labour under the misunderstanding that because we have low numbers of disease or death we do not have an imminent or real threat. Lack of disease in our community does not diminish the imminence or reality of that threat. We have seen how quickly the disease can spread if governments and their citizens choose to ignore it. We have seen the devastating outcomes in the USA and Brazil, and earlier in the pandemic in the UK. Sadly, we have also seen the very real impact on countries and societies where governments have had a will but have not had the means to respond.

Those raising concerns around human rights issues should take comfort from the evidence proffered by the Human Rights Commissioner. I encourage people to read that evidence in its entirety, but I want to quote one thing. He said—

In my view, looking at the risks of a pandemic to Queensland as a whole, I think the measures that have been taken to date insofar as the directions of the CHO go have been proportionate and reasonable.

I am proud that this vaccine is finally being rolled out. It is a modern healthcare miracle and I will say that many times. It gives us a very large potential to see that there is light at the end of this tunnel. If that was not the case and we were still labouring along without a vaccine, I think we would have to give serious consideration to the views expressed by Dr Kate Galloway. If we are still seeking exemptions in 12 to 24 months, I think we would have to seriously consider legislating for a new normal rather than relying on emergency powers, but that is not a case. We do have a vaccine rolling out and we do have the potential to see a light at the end of the tunnel. Extending these provisions by a further six months or so is very sensible and it is a really good step forward in keeping our communities safe.

For now, even with the vaccine rolling out, we are still in the grip of the emergency but I believe that we are very much winning. Keeping Queenslanders safe is what the Premier has done, that is what the Chief Health Officer has done, that is what the people of Queensland have done by working together and that is what this bill does. I commend the bill to the House.