




Speech By
Joseph Kelly

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Record of Proceedings, 20 April 2021

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (4.15 pm): I rise to speak in support of this bill. I would like to start by responding to a few of the things that have been said in the House. Firstly, I look forward to welcoming the member for Lytton to Langlands Park on Sunday, when Wynnum comes down to play the Brisbane Tigers in a COVID-safe environment. We can do that simply because of the sorts of measures we have in this bill. I thank her for her interest in coming down and participating in what will be a great game of Rugby League.

An honourable member: Go the Tigers!

Mr KELLY: Go the Tigers! Thank you to my fellow Tigers supporter. The member for Mermaid Beach raised some issues in relation to staff caring for people with COVID-19 and then caring for other people. The reality is that for pretty much the entire 30-something years of my involvement in health care we have had multiple patients in most wards with significant and serious infections. We have extremely good infection control processes in places. Some of those diseases are—

Mr Stevens interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Gerber): Pause the clock! Member for Mermaid Beach, cease your interjections.

Mr KELLY: Member for Mermaid Beach, I am going to listen. Some of those diseases are every bit as deadly as, if not more deadly than, COVID-19. We have really strict and different protocols in place for different types of diseases. That is not an unusual situation and it does not signify a failure of the health system. It is, sadly, in this day and age, normal routine business of the health system and of the nurses, doctors and allied health professionals who work in that system, day in and day out.

The member for Gregory posed a question. He said that Queenslanders want to know why they are doing it and what they are doing it for. I turn on the TV and see mass graves in Brazil. I see shocking visual images from India of people unable to get into hospital, let alone get a ventilator. I see people on Facebook looking for any sort of help and then reporting a few hours later that their relatives have died. I think that should answer for most Queenslanders what we are doing and why. I think Queenslanders are smart enough to have answered those questions for themselves.

I also want to pick up on some of the concerns the member raised in relation to masks. Yes, the advice around masks has changed, as many things in relation to this disease have changed. For example, the way that we ventilate and care for patients in intensive care has changed over the 15 or 16 months of this pandemic. Normally you would nurse a patient on their back when they are ventilated in intensive care. However, what has been discovered through research is that nursing a patient on their front and prone and ventilating them that way, which is an extremely unusual practice in intensive care, is a good way to move forward.

From my perspective, it is not unusual that there is changing advice in relation to masks and a whole range of things. In fact, in relation to the AstraZeneca vaccine—I can talk about this as both a receiver and a giver of the vaccine—when we received research-developed new information, we were able to change the practices of practitioners very quickly. That was done because of the extremely robust safety systems we have around vaccinations and clinical practice in this country.

I do not find it surprising at all that the advice changes. The member for Gregory says we have people in Boulia wearing masks to keep people in Woolloongabba safe. This is about keeping all Queenslanders safe. If the member is confused and cannot communicate these things clearly to his constituents—and I do not say that in a negative way—there is the opportunity to meet with the health minister and to seek briefings from the Chief Health Officer or her delegates to understand these restrictions. I have done that on many occasions because at times some of the provisions seem confusing. When one listens to the Chief Health Officer or her delegates, one finds the provisions are based on sound clinical evidence and many years of clinical practice.

This bill keeps Queenslanders safe. It has put us in the position of leading the recovery. We need to continue to do this. As I have said, we only need to look at what has happened overseas and is continuing to happen overseas to see why. We saw what happened in our state and city just before the Easter break. We know this disease can come back quickly. We do not have conclusive evidence yet around whether or not the vaccine will prevent the spread of the disease. It will stop you getting sick but it may not prevent the spread of the disease. That is why the current advice is that we will have to continue social distancing and those sorts of things for some time to come.

I want to talk a little about one set of provisions in this bill. One of the eye-opening things for me during the height of COVID last year was the difficult situation that retail and hospitality tenants found themselves in with regard to their relationships with their commercial landlords. There is a significant power imbalance in relation to that. It causes huge problems for people who are effectively working people with two mortgages. They have a mortgage on their home and a mortgage on their business. They have to try to negotiate with people who cut them no slack.

The provisions that established the Small Business Commissioner and made attempts to address that power imbalance are important and should continue. Many small businesses in areas like Stones Corner, Mount Gravatt Central in the member for Mansfield electorate and a whole raft of other areas—I do not have any really big shopping centres in my area; I have the wonderful Greenslopes Mall—struggle to have an equal relationship with their landlords. These provisions are important and perhaps one of the silver linings to come out of the COVID-19 experience. With those few words, I commend the bill to the House.