




Speech By  
**Julianne Gilbert**

**MEMBER FOR MACKAY**

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## **COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (5.18 pm): The COVID-19 Emergency Response and Other Legislation Amendment Bill is necessary to deliver Queensland through the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We need to do this safely. As we hear in media reports and as members who spoke before me have said, Brazil, Japan, India, Europe and our close neighbours in Papua New Guinea are right in the thick of the pandemic. It is far from over for them.

Some people think we have been a bit insulated from COVID taking hold in our communities, but there has been no luck involved in the way we have come through COVID-19. It is all because of the work that has gone on in terms of quick results and the strong leadership of our Premier, Anastacia Palaszczuk, and our health ministers: formerly Steven Miles and currently Yvette D'Ath. They are making decisions and sticking to the health advice. They are not swayed by the relentless attacks of the media and some members of the federal parliament.

Our leadership team wants to ensure that everyone in Queensland is safe. Dr Jeannette Young must also be commended for the steadfast way that she has kept Queensland safe. The only thing that she has on her mind when she reports back to our decision-makers is how she is going to make Queensland safe. She gives that advice so that our leadership team can put the right provisions in place. This approach of the Palaszczuk Labor government has not only kept us in Queensland physically safe but also kept our economy safe, and that is really important.

We have to have the powers necessary to give our decision-makers the ability to be swift and decisive. They need to be able to make decisions when necessary. We need to maintain that flexibility to provide the legislative framework introduced in 2020. The COVID-19 Emergency Response Act 2020 provided temporary powers to modify legislative requirements by regulation or other secondary instruments to reduce physical contact between persons, modify statutory time frames where necessary, ensure the continuation of court and tribunal proceedings and enable authority bodies to take actions electronically with regard to leases and tenancies.

Anzac Day is only days away and in Queensland we will be able to attend outdoor ceremonies without any COVID plans needed. Communities have been craving this normality. They want to be able to gather and they have a real need to be able to participate in days of cultural significance for our community. We need this legislation in place in order to be agile and make the right decisions so we can move into a phase of life that reflects what we had pre COVID, but we need to do it safely.

Governments in countries around the world which just let the virus rip and believed in herd immunity have seen their populations' health really suffer, and not just their health has suffered but their economies have suffered too. We have seen this firsthand in terms of the mining industries of other countries. In Australia, Queensland and Western Australia in particular took deliberate steps to protect our resources industries and restricted travel and our resources sectors have continued to operate

throughout the pandemic unlike countries like Brazil which had to shut their mines down because they had no workers because they were sick. Our resources sectors have been able to contribute to not only my local community but also the state and national economies.

Support services that back up our resource sector have also been able to continue safely because of the actions of our government. Instead of seeing a decline in employment in this sector, the industrial sector at Paget in Mackay grew. In fact, there would have been few places across Australia where there were signs out during the COVID lockdown wanting workers, and young people in Mackay were signed up for their first apprenticeship during this time. This was only possible because of the Palaszczuk Labor government's quick and decisive action. These stories would not be possible if we did not back in our government with the appropriate legislation. My region also relies on the sugar industry, and farmers need to be able to get their crops to the mill for crushing. Last year the sugar industry was able to proceed without any COVID interruptions. Mill workers kept their employment, farmers got their crops off the ground and our economy has continued to stay strong.

This bill ensures that any COVID-19 related legislation that is still required to respond to the COVID-19 emergency continues by amending the definition of the COVID-19 legislation expiry date to 30 September 2021, or earlier if prescribed by regulation. Extending the expiry of the provisions until 30 September this year will allow for consideration of any impacts that the national vaccine rollout may have in terms of ongoing needs for COVID-19 related legislation. We know that the rollout of the national vaccine program for COVID-19 has so far not been as successful as the federal government would have liked or had predicted. It has been plagued with problems of supply due to lack of ordering and the safety of the AstraZeneca vaccine for people under the age of 50. Queensland is ready and organised to roll out its vaccinations when and if the doses are supplied and arrive. COVID-19 has not gone away. We are still under its threat. I want to commend the committee for its work in ensuring that this bill was ready to be debated today and thank the outstanding chair, because he has done a marvellous job. I support this important bill.