




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR REDLANDS

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

 **Ms RICHARDS** (Redlands—ALP) (11.37 am): I rise to speak on the Public Health and Other Legislation (Further Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2021. I want to reflect on the member for Noosa's contribution. I do not think any member in this place back in January last year would have thought we would be 18 months now into a pandemic that certainly has not diminished in its impact on Australia but has escalated. With this bill we are looking to extend the emergency powers to April 2022. I think it is quite a reasonable, sensible and measured approach. I think it underpins how our Palaszczuk government has approached the COVID pandemic and why we are the only state on the eastern seaboard—the only jurisdiction—that is not currently in lockdown.

In terms of the business grants that the member mentioned, this particular round of grants that we have done in partnership with the federal government is not capped and it is open until November for businesses. I encourage the member to make sure that all of her businesses are aware that, if they are eligible, they can submit up until November and there is no capped limit.

This bill amends a lot of acts and regulations to make sure that we can continue to keep Queenslanders safe. Our continued approach to make very difficult decisions, to act rapidly and to go hard in response to this pandemic is why we are in the position that we are in today. This has been in stark contrast to the likes of New South Wales. I have heard some of the other contributions from the other side, and I have to wonder what planet they are living on if they cannot see what is going on in New South Wales.

I say that because I am the mum of a 27-year-old who is living in what used to be a hotel in the 1980s but which has been converted into apartments. He is in a studio apartment where the bedroom is the lounge room and the kitchen with an en suite off to the side. He is now into his 12th week of lockdown. He is allowed to go out for an hour's exercise. When you talk about picnics—for goodness sake! Seriously? His closest friend is outside the five-kilometre radius that is capped for movement. His girlfriend is in central New South Wales, so he has not seen her for 12 weeks. You really only have to look at where they are at. We know where they are at, but the real question is why they are there. I will tell you why they are there: because they have a government that has not had the right policy settings. They have not gone hard; they have not gone fast. I speak to my son and his friends. We communicate a lot. You only need to ask them. They are angry. They are not happy.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms RICHARDS: There are not many people in New South Wales who are very happy about the position they are in. You can talk to businesses down in New South Wales. I can tell you where they would rather be operating their businesses from, and it is not down there: it is up here in Queensland. Being quick to act on masks and being quick to act on lockdowns is what ensures we keep Queenslanders safe, and it is why New South Wales is in the position they are in. When governments act swiftly and have the right policy settings in place you do not see 1,116 cases like we saw yesterday,

you do not see 100 deaths in 78 days in New South Wales. One hundred deaths in 78 days! Case numbers last week were around 5,000. You only need to look at the spread that is occurring, because this week it is about 7,300 and growing. It continues to grow because they did not act fast and they did not act hard.

The four people who died yesterday were women in their 50s, 60s, 70s and 80s, but then we come to the fact they were unvaccinated. When we talk about the vaccine rollout, the Prime Minister had two jobs—quarantine and vaccine rollout—and he has absolutely stuffed it. He got it wrong from the get-go. We were the slowest nation in the world to get on top of the vaccine rollout. Thank God for our Palaszczuk government! We are building quarantine facilities up at Wellcamp. We are taking the lead and making sure we continue to keep Queenslanders safe. This bill is important to make sure we continue to be the state that leads the nation in the COVID health response and economic recovery. I commend this bill to the House.