




Speech By
Laura Gerber

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Record of Proceedings, 2 September 2021

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

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (11.42 am): My community understands better than most the current impact of COVID-19 restrictions. I want to keep my community safe just like all members here, but we also do not want to see the restrictions and extraordinary public health powers the government currently has to curtail people's freedoms last a second longer than they need to.

Much has changed since the initial public health emergency was declared in January 2020. Even in the last few months we have seen an ever-increasing supply of vaccines and the opportunity to begin transitioning to a post-COVID Queensland. Our communities right now depend on this government to have a clear plan, a step-by-step road map grounded by expert advice that shows our community a path out of this pandemic, when borders will open, when lockdowns will be limited, when our businesses can reliably plan for the future and when Queenslanders can be assured they will be able to come home to their families. So far this government has no such plan. Currumbin constituents cannot continue to shoulder the burden of the state border closure for the rest of Queensland without hope and without a path forward.

In the immediate term I will continue to call for targeted financial support for border businesses and the reinstatement of the previously safe and successful border bubble. It is desperately needed. If the NRL can have their league bubble then my border community can have their border bubble back. Moving forward, my electorate deserves to know the plan for our community and indeed the state. They deserve to know what the—

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order, members! Pause the clock.

Ms SIMPSON: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I apologise for bringing a point of order, but my colleague is being repeatedly harassed by the other side. It has been going on all week and for several weeks. It really is unacceptable. I seek your assistance in protecting my colleague from these repeated attacks by other members.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will take some advice. I thank the member for the point of order. I was conversing with a member who was seeking my guidance on something. Neither the clerk at the table or I witnessed the behaviour you are referring to, but we will be keeping a close eye on this. We remind all members to maintain orderly behaviour at all times while in the chamber.

Mrs GERBER: That is why the LNP has proposed reasonable amendments to this bill. Our amendments require that the health advice that decisions about border restrictions and lockdowns is purportedly based on is released. Our amendment requires that these extraordinary powers do not extend for a day longer than they are needed. Every facet of my community is directly and profoundly impacted by these laws. Chris from Currumbin wrote to me about his daughter's schooling. He stated—

Teachers are not essential which is beyond belief, my daughters' school in Currumbin is missing a great number of teachers and I know my daughter is really struggling.

Marcelo from Tugun wrote that he just wants to visit his elderly grandmother. He says—

I have been prevented from visiting my 94-year-old grandmother who lives in Murwillumbah and suffers from bad dementia. Livelihoods are being destroyed and families are torn apart. Whole townships are being affected by an invisible line within our communities.

Ann owns Bellakai Cafe in Coolangatta, a Queensland business that has been established for 12 years and employs 18 staff. She writes—

The current suspension of the QLD-NSW border residents' zone means that for many businesses, their staff cannot attend work mere kilometres over the border, so how will we maintain our businesses?

Extending these powers will mean that families in my electorate will continue to be separated, businesses will continue to shut down and people will continue to be without employment. The impact of these powers is incredible. My community has already sacrificed so much to keep our fellow Queenslanders safe. The Premier likes to take credit for keeping Queensland safe, but it was not the Premier: it was every single Queenslander who kept us safe by wearing their masks, by staying home, by restricting their businesses, by losing their income, by staying separated from their loved ones and by giving up their freedoms. They are prepared to do it again if it is necessary, but only if it is necessary.

I do not think it is too much to ask that the health advice be released so my community can understand why they must give up their freedoms or that these extraordinary powers are reviewed at the end of the year rather than extended until April next year. It is a very reasonable request, and I implore all members in this House to support the LNP's amendments to the public health bill.