




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR LOGAN

Record of Proceedings, 17 November 2021

JUSTICE LEGISLATION (COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE—PERMANENCY) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (6.15 pm): I rise to speak on the Justice Legislation (COVID-19 Emergency Response—Permanency) Amendment Bill. One of the reasons that I do so is that the Economics and Governance Committee, of which I am a member, played a role in this legislation as did the Health and Environment Committee. When we put these temporary measures in place to make working life easier and reduce contact, it made us look at innovations that we could implement in terms of the way that we run our state. During that process we heard commentary from stakeholders. I especially recognise the Queensland Law Society, which felt that some of the temporary health measures that we had put in place could be safely and fairly continued, giving benefit to Queenslanders.

Before I entered the chamber I heard our friends opposite on Sky News saying that, when people look back at our role and the role of all Queenslanders during this period of COVID, they will describe this time as an unprecedented stain on our history. It is really quite disturbing that they are still running such arguments even as there are significant case numbers in the United States and as parts of Europe are going back into lockdown or increasing their restrictions. It seems that thousands of times others have claimed the pandemic to be over only to be wrong each time. They have not learnt their lessons and many in the LNP are the same.

Some people have described the actions of government as unprecedented and perhaps some of those who were marching today think that. I want to push back on that idea because many of the health measures we have implemented to keep Queenslanders safe, such as the powers given to the Chief Health Officer, are very similar to the legislation of 1917. In 1917 Queensland faced a flu pandemic, which is an entirely predictable pandemic disease just as this one broadly is, not in its detailed characteristics but in its general characteristics. We have introduced the same measures. In 1917 there were border controls and camps where people were quarantined. Incoming ships were quarantined. Of course, in 1917 they did not have the issues that we face with air travel or the large volume of fast-moving cars crossing our borders. The challenges were somewhat different, but the principles that are part of the founding of the Queensland colony and the Queensland state and that were utilised in 1917 are part of the process that has kept us safe now. It is part of our history to protect Queenslanders from dangerous disease, to recognise pandemics and to put in place measures to keep us safe.

Some people talk about rights. Rights are important. However, it must be clearly stated that no-one has the right to infect others with an infectious disease. If we take measures that may impact on some rights, we do it because we recognise that no-one has the right to infect others with an infectious disease and that people have the right to go about their business safely. We recognise the collective responsibility in that approach. The one difference that I want to highlight between 1917 and now is the effective presence of a vaccine. In 1917, if they had an effective flu vaccine that could have made people 10 to 11 times less likely to catch the flu then Queenslanders would have flocked to take it, just as they are doing today. However, but they did not have access to a vaccine.

This time around, though, we have a vaccine. It is safe. It has very rare side effects—side effects we have been very transparent about. We have tried to take Queenslanders into our confidence and show them that there are rare side effects but that they should not be afraid of this because, on balance, it is so much safer to take the vaccine than to face the effects of COVID-19. As I said, if this existed in 1917 Queenslanders would have rushed the gates in order to get it.

We know that having the vaccine makes you much less likely to get COVID-19. If you do not get it then you cannot pass it on, but if you do get COVID-19—and there are breakthrough cases; we have also been transparent about that—the evidence seems to be relatively clear that, even if you have it—and we are 10 to 11 times less likely to get it—you are less likely to pass it on. The study that was most important for me showed that when vaccinated people returned to their house—even if they were later found to have COVID-19—they were much less likely to pass it on to others in their household. Can you think of a greater incentive than keeping your immediate family safe? The best studies about vaccination show that those who are vaccinated are less likely to pass on the virus to those in their own household than are those who are unvaccinated. I cannot think of a better reason to get vaccinated. When I visit my mum at Christmas, we will all be staying together. I cannot think of a better reason for every Queenslander to get vaccinated than the time they will spend with their families at Christmas.

I am extraordinarily proud of the people of Logan. At the beginning we were not leading the pack, as we are now. There was some uncertainty as people had to digest the information. There was caution because they were being fed so much information, not least from the forces of Mr Palmer but also certain LNP senators. There are federal LNP members of parliament who have not been condemned. All those opposite should stand up and condemn Senator Rennick and the federal member representing Mackay, but none of them will because they do not have the strength to stand for what is right when their party is running in a different direction. There was caution over the misinformation that the LNP and others put out. Once we saw that—

Mr Watts interjected.

Mr POWER: It is extraordinary that those opposite would shout down the great work that people in Logan are doing to get vaccinated. It is disgraceful. In Logan, people are getting vaccinated at record rates. We started up the race for 80 per cent and on Monday we exceeded 80 per cent. On the most recent information that has come out, the Premier announced this morning that we have reached over—

Mr WEIR: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. I ask that the member in his last two minutes actually speaks to the bill.

Mr POWER: I think that is excellent, Mr Deputy Speaker. I return to relevance. I was getting—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Member, I ask you to resume your seat while I rule on the point of order. I have been listening to the contribution. Many of the speakers on both sides of the House have perhaps strayed away from the long title of the bill. I believe the member is rebutting some points that were made earlier, but I ask the member to come back to the long title of the bill.

Mr POWER: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. When it comes to liquor reforms, we know that the people in Logan want to get vaccinated and be in areas and hotels where others are vaccinated. They know that people who are vaccinated are 10 to 11 times less likely to have COVID and that being vaccinated will make it much safer. When they visit cafes and queue up in different places, people in Logan will be safer. Therefore, in Logan we need to race on from the 80 per cent that we were at on Monday and the 83 per cent the Premier announced this morning to 90 per cent. Those who have doubts need to look around Logan and think that nine out of 10 residents are already vaccinated. They are safe—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I bring you back to the long title of the bill, please, member.

Mr POWER: They are safe. When you visit a cafe after these new laws are in place and pick up a drink with your meal, you know that in that queue you will be safe. The entire gamut of legislation will make an enormous difference. These changes to common law are vital to modernising it.

In evidence to the Economics and Governance Committee, the Queensland Law Society spoke of the need for things such as deeds that are executed on paper—or indeed parchment or vellum—to be executed electronically. The pandemic gave us the opportunity to test this change. You could make an argument that with the race to 90 per cent vaccinated in Logan they could do it, but this is just a sensible change resulting in less regulation and better processes. I endorse these changes.