




Speech By  
**Mark Robinson**

**MEMBER FOR OODGEROO**

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

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Oodgeroo—LNP) (3.00 pm): As a member of the Health and Environment Committee, I will make a brief contribution to the debate on the Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2020. I thank all of the committee members and the secretariat for their work on what is a very important piece of legislation. I acknowledge the federal government's handling of the health crisis—

**Ms Boyd:** It was terrible.

**Dr ROBINSON:**—the economic crisis and the jobs crisis that followed these events. For the most part, our federal government and its hard work has kept us safe. I express that on the public record today. It seems some members opposite do not agree with that. I think there has been amazing cooperation between governments at a federal and a state level across our nation and that has been important in terms of initiatives like the national cabinet framework. That level of cooperation is important. Members of parliament should remain open-minded and not political on this matter.

Along with my LNP colleagues in the House, I will not be opposing the extension of the provisions outlined in this bill. We in the LNP respect the Chief Health Officer in her role to provide accurate and timely medical advice to the government, to the parliament and to the public. It is very important that we understand that role in those three areas. The role provides advice to the government, but in a broader sense it advises the parliament. I appreciate Dr Young's involvement in the hearings and her availability to answer questions that the committee posed, which is important in terms of the parliament's operation and in terms of communicating information to the public in a timely, accurate and effective way. We further understand that the extension of these provisions will give the Chief Health Officer and other authorities the necessary powers to respond to the ongoing risks associated with the spread of COVID-19 in Queensland so that Queenslanders can be kept safe.

I support the bill. Having said that, and being clear about that, my community has raised concerns with me about how the state government has at times exercised these powers in some instances. I believe we can learn from these instances, as we must. I want to put on record this feedback from the Redlands Coast community. There is also an element in my community that is concerned about the fitness of this particular state government to hold such special powers for too long, if at all. The fact is that the powers the government is to hold are temporary and conclude in September 2021, to my understanding of things. That is significant to them and I acknowledge that. That is the feedback that I have received from my local community.

Concerns have been raised about what at times appears to be the government's lack of compassion and consistency—again, I clarify that I am talking about the government's interpretation of things—lack of clear and timely communication, and transparency. These matters have been raised with me locally. There have been questions also about some of the exceptions or exemptions to quarantine, particularly when it has involved very sensitive situations like funerals and events that have

impacted on people deeply. There have been concerns raised in my local community about that. I note that in the committee meetings the Human Rights Commissioner made comment on the low level of exceptions or exemptions and about one per cent being a very low rate. I think we need to be very aware that at times there have been circumstances that we may have looked at in a different light. It is always easier to look back on those matters with hindsight, and I understand and accept that.

There was one significant local example, which I think illustrates some of the concerns, and that was the story of Sarah Caisip. Sarah's partner and her partner's family live in the Redlands, in Cleveland. They came to my office for help. Sarah was living in Canberra and wanted to come back to Brisbane to see her father who at the time was still alive but then passed away. She wanted to be at his funeral. While she was in quarantine she made contact with my office. We made contact with the Premier's office, which referred the matter to the health minister's office. In the process of both phone and email contact from my office over several days, we received no return communication from the health minister's office. There was not an attempt to phone us. There was not an attempt to email us. I do not think that is good enough.

**A government member** interjected.

**Dr ROBINSON:** When members of parliament, in a caring and bipartisan way, raise issues about very real circumstances that impact on the mental health of young people I think it is important to respond. Rather than argue, I would hope that the minister would take these things on board. I note what seems to be the minister's argument with it, but I will park that.

In communicating with Sarah through that week, she felt very lonely in quarantine. Her father passing away had a very deep impact on her. She contacted my office and we kept up that communication with her through the week. It was a very difficult time and she suffered through it. She was not allowed to go to the funeral but eventually she was allowed to go to a viewing of her father's body. That was meaningful to her. Looking at all of this in hindsight, it could have been handled better. The human impacts are very deep for some people. After quarantine the first thing Sarah did was come to my office to say thank you to my staff for the way they cared and stayed in contact with her during her very low period of feeling isolated in quarantine. We were very grateful to her for that. We had never met her or known her before that incident.

Without beating up on the government, I think we need to learn from these instances and make sure that there is communication with members of parliament and officers so that we are working on the same team in this regard. I believe this matter could have been handled better. In supporting this bill, I ask the government to be more careful in considering the human impacts. In closing, we know that being kept safe is a high priority for all Queenslanders. We respect and understand that the health advice must be followed. The LNP have been unequivocal on the matter of following health advice. We support following the health advice and we acknowledge the great sacrifice many Queenslanders have made through this terrible period of our history. We support the bill.