



Speech By  
**Melissa McMahon**

**MEMBER FOR MACALISTER**

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Record of Proceedings, 1 September 2021

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

 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (4.22 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Public Health and Other Legislation (Further Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill. As a member of the committee that considered this bill I would like to outline the context in which we considered it. It was introduced into the House on 16 June and referred to the committee on 18 June 2021. On that date Queensland recorded three new cases of COVID-19, all detected in hotel quarantine. New South Wales recorded two on that day. We held the public briefing on 5 July 2021. On that day Queensland had seven new cases, four of which were locally acquired. On that day New South Wales recorded 35 new locally acquired cases. By the time we got to the public hearings on 19 July Queensland was back down to two new cases, which were overseas acquired, whilst New South Wales recorded 98 new cases. This report was tabled on 6 August. On that day Queensland had 10 locally acquired cases and New South Wales had 291.

In the space of that time, two separate outbreaks had occurred in Queensland and two separate lockdowns were instigated throughout South-East Queensland and other parts of the state. New South Wales has had the single ongoing outbreak with only partial restrictions and only recent lockdowns. Today New South Wales had 1,116 locally acquired cases while here in Queensland we had zero.

I outline these numbers because at the introduction of this bill there was a public perception that we were on the way out of this COVID pandemic and that there would be no need for the powers outlined in this bill beyond this year. I think very few would have considered that by the time we debated this bill we would have the numbers we are currently seeing in New South Wales and the lockdowns impacting other states.

The purpose of this bill is to extend the temporary emergency provisions through to 30 April 2022. I understand many commentators see this as an overreach and that the power should only be extended until the end of this year. However, that does not take into consideration the work that is done to consider such power extensions in advance. As a committee we considered this bill to the appropriate level of scrutiny. I would love to see those commentators' crystal balls that were so bold in predicting what numbers will come in December. I wonder if they saw today's New South Wales numbers in those crystal balls back in June when the bill was introduced. I know the member for Clayfield would like certainty during this pandemic, but I do not think there is anyone who can guarantee him that.

I understand that as we roll into the end of the year that the vaccination rate here in Queensland will increase with the assistance of the overseas countries that have helped boost our supply of vaccine. This vaccination rate will have an impact on the wellbeing of Queenslanders. I take this opportunity to encourage Queenslanders to get vaccinated. I am a proud fully vaccinated member of the Logan community. I exhort other members of the Logan community to get together and ensure we can fight this together.

I understand that the target is 80 per cent but acknowledge that that carries the caveat of the eligible population. Who is not eligible? Children under the age of 12. I hear the phrase, 'We must learn to live with the virus' and 'We need to acknowledge the sacrifice that people have made through these lockdowns.' I can tell members who does not say that. It is parents with children under the age of 12 and vulnerable members of our community—the ones who cannot be vaccinated.

I have three children under 12. When will they get their vaccinations? When will they be safe? I have a child with respiratory issues who struggles during a common cold and who is no stranger to ICU and the resuscitation unit. He only leaves the house to go to school and to go to his specialist appointments under his NDIS capacity building. How does he live with the virus? Every time the school calls me to tell me he has a cold we have to pick him up and get him tested. People do not know the trauma of getting an autistic child tested for COVID—all the people in their masks coming up to him to stick something in his body. He lives with that and we have no lockdown in Queensland.

Our community has many immunocompromised people, young and old. Explain to me how they will learn to live with the virus. As a mother and as an MP, I will feel more comfortable and confident in the safety of our community when we have included the entire Australian community as eligible. We have many things to consider in this House, but first and foremost is the safety of the Queensland community—the safety of my community. If it requires this bill being extended to keep the community safe I commend the bill to the House.