




Speech By
Nikki Boyd

MEMBER FOR PINE RIVERS

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COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms BOYD** (Pine Rivers—ALP) (4.29 pm): The COVID-19 public health emergency has affected every aspect of Queenslanders' lives. The sacrifice has been great, but it has been effective. More so than ever, people in my community are telling me that they not only appreciate the response, decisive and correct action by our Premier and health department but also appreciate the ability each relaxation of restrictions brings which enable them to slowly return to their pre-COVID lives.

However, the emergency response effort is not yet over. We must ensure that not only Queensland's health system can continue to effectively respond effectively to the ever-shifting challenges posed by COVID-19 but also other measures are put in place in areas across Queensland that are essential to Queenslanders.

Of course, as honourable members have already highlighted throughout their contributions, this is the third time that we return to this place to extend emergency provisions. Undoubtedly, they have kept us safe but, like many other Queenslanders, I am starting to worry how much longer we will be at this, with the monumental failure of the Commonwealth government's vaccine rollout.

When this bill was introduced, the road map for our nation looked much brighter—there can be no mistake why the Palaszczuk government set the expiry date at 30 September 2021. How much that brightness has diminished sadly! In a matter of weeks, the Morrison government's vaccination program has been uncovered as a total shambles.

Mr Power: A broken promise.

Ms BOYD: I take that interjection from the member for Logan: it is a broken promise. Those opposite tell us they do not want to see any more extensions to emergency powers. They tell us they want this over sooner—but I do not hear a single one of them in this place or in their communities calling on the Morrison government for an improved vaccination program, calling on the Morrison government to take responsibility for the Aussies still stranded overseas, families separated and distressed. All the while we are lumbered with a federal government polarised by scandal, unable and unwilling to take responsibility and better facilitate their homecoming and provide better quarantine facilities to protect Queenslanders from future outbreaks.

Ms Grace: Can they get anything right?

Ms BOYD: I take that interjection from the member for McConnel. I am not too sure. It would appear not.

The member for Mermaid Beach in his contribution blamed Labor's incompetence in overseas returns for allowing COVID to escape out into the community again. Our Premier has asked the Prime Minister to provide for facilities to move hotel quarantine away from the populated urban centres to avoid transmission of the highly contagious overseas strains. On that front we see no action.

Mr Stevens: It is your responsibility.

Ms BOYD: I take that interjection from the member for Mermaid Beach. Overseas quarantine is not the responsibility of the state government. Vaccination is not the responsibility of the state government. It is the responsibility of the Morrison government.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Walker): Put your comments through the chair.

Ms BOYD: Honourable members opposite would do well to start calling on the Morrison government to deliver in this space because it is a monumental failure and it is embarrassing Australia as a nation on the world stage.

On the front of moving hotel quarantine into designated facilities, we see no action from the Morrison government. We see no action on the front of vaccinations. It is quite the opposite: we are going backwards. We have seen total ineptitude from the Morrison government. The vaccine is our way out of this pandemic. It is a national shame that we are tracking 100th in the world—we are ranked 100th in the world—in administering our vaccines. We are being eclipsed by countries like Nepal, Chile and Serbia.

I want to remark on the earlier contribution from the member for Gregory. He remarked on the Central Highlands—a massive space in his electorate that is the size of Tasmania with one GP to roll out the vaccination. Not once during his contribution did the member for Gregory ever call on the Morrison government to make improvements in that space. He wrapped it up, packaged it and spat it out like it was a problem of the state government when in fact it is not. It is a problem and a failing of the Morrison government. It would be really nice to hear the LNP members in this chamber in Queensland calling on the Morrison government in Canberra to do better.

Of course the vaccine is our way out of this pandemic, and it is never as stark a realisation as when there is an outbreak of community transmission. Last month's three-day lockdown struck particularly close to home to those in my community of Pine Rivers. Some of the 23 identified cases in the outbreak were members of our community. Those businesses in the 150 exposure sites were many of our local businesses. Many of the 82,000 tests conducted were samples taken at our local fever clinics. Contact tracers identified 2,500 close contacts and managed to get on top of the spread through the snap three-day lockdown and contain the community transmission.

I want to place on record my thanks to my community for their resilience, understanding and conduct during this time. I also place on record my thanks, yet again, to the phenomenal health workers we have within Queensland Health who absolutely shine during these times of crises. We certainly saw that in our community throughout that snap three-day lockdown.

It is a testament to Queensland that we were able to contain the outbreaks to 23 cases in Greater Brisbane and confine the lockdown to only three days. Sticking together is so vital through these times, supporting one another, doing the right thing—following directions. My community has been exemplar throughout these latest challenges, a time that tested and strengthened our resolve.

Finally, I want to speak to some of the amendments in this bill with respect to the local government portfolio legislation. From the outset I note the overwhelming support from the sector to extend these amendments and to retain the flexibility that local government needs during these uncertain times to respond to emerging situations. I have listened with real interest during this debate to the contributions of those opposite, with undertones of cynicism and scepticism in their contributions. As I have sat here as the Assistant Minister for Local Government, I have found these contributions to be, quite frankly, offensive.

I think it is important to highlight that the flexibility that this bill provides will allow for our councils to provide additional community support and greater community concessions as we respond to new economic climates in a post-JobKeeper world—that has stopped; that has gone now despite cries and pleas by community members to keep it—and pre-vaccine. There was a point in time when the community had a full expectation that when JobKeeper ended the vaccine would be sorted, but because of monumental failures by the federal government we are not in that position.

I want to recognise and credit our local governments like my communities' own council in Moreton Bay who have delayed rate notices and who have implemented additional support to community members who are doing it tough. I know through talking to our mayors and local councillors across Queensland that assisting and rebuilding their communities is their priority. It is a pity that those opposite do not have the same outlook. Seemingly they do not hold their community members in high regard or respect as they deserve.

I also want to thank the Economics and Governance Committee for their hard work. I know it is a fantastic committee. I was once a member—and I do miss it, I must confess.

Mr Power: It is actually you, Ray!

Ms BOYD: I take the interjection from the member for Logan—especially the member for Mermaid Beach! I thank them for their hard and diligent work on this bill. I absolutely commend the bill to the House.