




Speech By  
**Peter Russo**  
**MEMBER FOR TOOHEY**

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Record of Proceedings, 18 November 2021

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

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (11.13 am), continuing: I will start where I finished last night prior to the adjournment debate. We would not be in this strong position today without the decisive and effective action taken by the Palaszczuk government over the past 22 months. Measures to reduce regulatory barriers and to support the recovery of small business are incredibly important tools as Queensland recovers and moves forward in our strong economic recovery. Now we need everyone to get vaccinated and I thank Queenslanders who have already rolled up their sleeves to get vaccinated. The actions taken by the Palaszczuk government not only have saved lives; they have saved jobs, they have saved people's homes and they have saved families. That does not diminish what many have faced during the past year.

Previous emergency response measures include establishing a temporary Queensland Small Business Commissioner to provide information and advisory services to the public about matters relevant to small business. That measure was very well received by small business owners and operators across the state and provisions are underway to make the position permanent. The bill provides for the QSBC to continue to provide mediation on affected lease disputes until the position of the QSBC is made permanent and also preserves any rent relief arrangements under the lease regulation.

The bill references temporary liquor reforms made in response to COVID-19 to provide restaurants and selected cafes with a limited ability to sell takeaway liquor. While differing from the COVID-19 temporary takeaway liquor measures, the bill will introduce an approval process for restaurants to apply to the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation for a variation of licence authorising the sale of 1.5 litres of takeaway wine with a takeaway meal. As everybody knows, in my electorate many restaurants suffered because of COVID. In March 2020 the Premier visited my electorate to support those restaurants and had yum cha at the world-famous Landmark Restaurant.

Stakeholders expressed various and often opposing views about this part of the bill. The inquiring committee formed the view that there is an opportunity to find a middle ground that meets the needs of all parties and supports small business as well as the harm minimisation strategies over which concerns were expressed.

In the remaining time I will deal with some of the amendments that will be moved by the Attorney-General during consideration in detail. These are sensible amendments that allow government departments to take advantage of the modernisation of practices by which important legal documents are made, signed and witnessed. The amendments are welcomed, are complementary to business practices and will improve access to justice in Queensland.

The objectives of the amendments include improving the intended operation of the document reforms. They clarify provisions and introduce a transition provision to provide legal certainty for deeds executed by the state and corporations under the justice legislation. The bill will amend the Oaths Act to clarify the procedural and document retention requirements that apply to the witnessing of affidavits

and statutory declarations in person and over audiovisual link, consistent with the policy and objectives of the bill. The bill will allow a witness to sign either the same document, a true copy of the document or a counterpart of the document, that is, a copy that does not contain the other signatures. This provides flexibility for the document creation process to ensure that documents can be made efficiently, depending on the circumstances of each case.

When the witness signs the same document or when a true copy of the document is signed by the signatory or substitute signatory, it results in a document that has both signatures on it called the official version, but the signatures may not be original because the documents can be scanned and electronically shared. The bill currently provides that the version of document that was signed physically or electronically by the signature is supported. I commend the bill to the House.