




Speech By
Sandy Bolton

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

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MOTION

Business Program

 **Ms BOLTON (Noosa—Ind) (11.35 am):** Members know that it is rare for me to get up and oppose the business motion. I appreciate what both ministers have said. However, we are not trying to undermine anything here, nor disrespect the efforts that have been made. What we have sought is an extension of time to give voice to our people. This is the people's house and all people from across Queensland should be heard.

I realise other electorates may not have some of the impacts that are felt in electorates like Noosa, but people are on their knees and we need that time to give them a voice. Who are these people? The member for Kawana mentioned a couple. We have got businesses that are told to close and are not compensated adequately. We have got staff who for every day they are closed cannot meet their rents. We have got businesses and people living off personal loans now for over a year and they do not even know where to turn anymore. We have got spiralling mental health, where it takes more than two months to even get in to see a mental health professional. Then we can talk about the waitlist, and we have got heartbreaking stories of constituents in agony who are now on an 18-month list to get operations they desperately need to keep working.

In my community, we have had an increase in domestic violence of 30 per cent, year on year, for two years now. I wonder about all of those who we actually do not even know about. We have a humanitarian crisis where our workers and long-term residents are couch surfing or living in sheds or wherever they can. We have staff walking out or on stress leave because of the abuse they are receiving, or they are losing their long-held jobs in aged care and disability care because of their own personal choice regarding vaccinations. We had protesters before there were even protests down here, and today again we had them in Noosa.

I understand that there are other states and other countries that are suffering worse, but this is Queensland and we have to look after our people. We have got residents caught over the border. I can tell the House some horrific stories of what has happened to some of our women travelling alone. They do not even have the option to come back into quarantine. I understand the Premier has spoken about this, but we have NRL players and families who are able to fly in from hotspots. Do not get me wrong: everyone loves the game, however what we desperately need is consistency and equity. My community cannot get their heads around this, regardless of explanations. The list goes on but I may not get to tell their stories.

With the business motion, not the amendment, allowing limited time—and we have to include consideration in detail, the Queensland app, the Ekka show holiday, personalised transport and also the extra two deputy CHOs—I might not get an opportunity. The government may not believe so much needs to be said, given that we have debated these same provisions before, however that misses the point for my community and the communities of other MPs here.

These provisions were debated before we reached this time point—we are now coming up to two years of this pandemic—before we realised things like flattening the curve were not going to be enough, before we saw the real grassroots impacts and what is needed going forward. It is so important that we should have time to talk about this. This inability to secure the extra time also demonstrates how the committee system is flawed because even when we are there, regardless of our objections, we cannot influence the determinations.

Queenslanders have worked through this pandemic together. However, those who are not in jobs that still pay during lockdowns or are not sufficiently supported are wearing the brunt of these efforts to keep Queenslanders safe and they feel that we are no longer in this together. This has become an economic divide of the have and the have-nots or the secure and the insecure. Can honourable members imagine how isolated, devastated and let down they feel? I think that is just reason to have extra time in the debate. Hence, they are the reasons I oppose the government's motion and I support the amendments put forward by the member for Kawana.