




Speech By  
**Sandy Bolton**

**MEMBER FOR NOOSA**

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Record of Proceedings, 2 September 2021

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

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (11.32 am): Submitters to the committee inquiry on the bill such as the Queensland Police Commissioned Officers' Union of Employees and the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties believe that the extension to 30 April 2022 is too long and should be amended to 31 December this year. Then, if further extensions are needed, they can be requested. My community would agree.

As we have already heard, lack of clarity around targets and time lines and changing goalposts, combined with an overload of conflicting information and the ongoing misinformation, is creating increased angst and trauma in our communities. The impacts from lockdowns are devastating to small business and those reliant on them, leading to a loss of confidence and ongoing uncertainty.

This bill would allow lockdowns, without debate or input from those being impacted or without parliamentary oversight, to continue well into 2022 which for those under this severe mental duress seems insurmountable. The Queensland Human Rights Commission also noted this in their submission and this is the reason why I sought extra time for debating this bill—not in opposition or to undermine the incredible efforts of Queensland and the government during this pandemic, as I said yesterday, but to give voice to those who are bearing the brunt. They need our help. Just like the Premier said this morning that she is waiting for answers, they are waiting for answers. They are not asking for a lot, but they seek the following.

They want our state and federal leaders to remain united with a succinct plan, targets and time frames. We are one country and supposed to be in this together. They want guaranteed financial support, instead of grants that become oversubscribed, for every day our small businesses are required to close, as well as for staff who are only paid when they are open. They need affordable insurance packages for our businesses and those who need to travel to accommodate losses and quarantine costs.

They seek straight answers to questions, including infringement on privacy from the Check In Qld app. The Queensland Law Society and the Australian Lawyers Alliance submitted that legislative change is needed so that the information community members provide is kept private and cannot be accessed by other agencies.

They seek reassurance regarding mandatory vaccinations including for our children, lockdowns and mask wearing to put an end to the misinformation that is overwhelming our communities. They seek financial support for those in vaccination mandated industries to retrain into other positions and industries if they do not or cannot vaccinate.

They want clarity around vaccination passports. We are one country, and delineation between states and territories is creating divisions and isolation. Remember that we are supposed to be in this together.

They want equitable and consistent decisions. Allowing visiting teams from hotspots when our own people cannot come over the border is just wrong. Finally, with a current lack of consistency in decision-making amongst the chief health officers across Australia, they want assurances regarding the appointment and transition to our new CHO.

The level of angst in my community reached what I term the 'tipping point', where confidence was shattered in those impacted the most. The common denominator was the economic capacity of individuals and businesses to accommodate ongoing lockdowns and border closures. Noosa is below the South-East Queensland average in income, heavily reliant on tourism and hospitality. These are the industries that employ the majority of our residents and are the ones that are critically impacted. They are not asking for anything that risks Queenslanders. They are just asking for sufficient support.

If this bill is extended all the way through to the end of April next year, without the assurances they are seeking, they will live in angst every day in fear of announcements. Uncertainty is impacting heavily on mental health, especially when neither they nor their MPs have a say in the decisions that can make or break their world.

The committee in its inquiry received 588 submissions, most of which were in opposition to the bill. I am appreciative that community consultation was undertaken. With the need for a time line that our communities can visualise, I ask that government support the amendment to reduce the time frame of the extension to December 2021. This will not risk in any way the health of Queenslanders as we can extend when needed. It will, however, give the assurance they need the most right now as part of their physical, emotional and mental wellbeing. It will give some certainty in uncertain times, as well as reduce the anger, angst and protests being experienced.