




Speech By
Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

Record of Proceedings, 25 October 2022

**PUBLIC HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION (COVID-19 MANAGEMENT)
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (6.20 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate of the Public Health and Other Legislation (COVID-19 Management) Amendment Bill 2022. My contribution can be summed up in one simple word: enough. The community of the electorate of Glass House and the communities of Queensland have simply had enough. I acknowledge, as was raised by the previous speaker and a number of other speakers, that many of the things that the LNP opposition have been calling for all along this long journey, particularly around transparency with the public and oversight by the parliament, are finally being brought into legislation. That begs the question: why could that not have been done sooner? If it can be done now, why could it not have been done sooner? We called for this parliament to have more say in the directions that were being given to the public. We called for the government to be more transparent in explaining why they were making the decisions they were making. They refused to do either. They are finally putting some of that into legislation today.

We do note—this is why again I say ‘enough’—that this legislation brings in new temporary powers to make and enforce public health directions to manage COVID-19 as a notifiable condition under the Public Health Act until 31 October 2023—another 12 months—and new procedures and safeguards for issuing public health directions for COVID-19.

What is concerning us and a number of the submitters to the committee’s consideration of this bill are a number of things but particularly two. The first is that ‘serious risk’ is not defined in the bill. That does leave matters open to interpretation. That is outlined in the executive summary of the committee’s report. The second is that we are empowering the Chief Health Officer to give public health directions, rather than a minister, an elected representative or indeed this House. On those two grounds, I know that the people of Glass House will continue to have concerns. On those two grounds alone, I know that the people of Glass House will echo what I am saying: enough. On those two grounds, I cannot support this legislation.