



Speech By
Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

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HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (6.15 pm): I rise to support the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Like many members on both sides, I wish to acknowledge the incredible work of our health workers. I especially want to recognise those who worked in the vaccination centres. I know you, Mr Deputy Speaker Kelly, worked shifts in the vaccination centre, reassuring people and helping them to understand that getting their vaccination meant that they were less likely to spread the disease, less likely to catch the disease and, if they did catch it, less likely to be severely ill and much less likely to die.

I spoke before of the enormous feeling of guilt I would have if I had not done everything I could in order to save those around me or to not spread it to those around me. That is the attitude that we should have in this place—that is, that we are doing it for others, and the evidence is really clear that it is also much better for yourself. I want to thank those who worked in the vaccination centres, especially those who worked in the Logan Entertainment Centre. When I took my two teenagers there, it was an extraordinary honour to see people from all walks of life, from all social climes, lining up together because they were doing something for Queensland. They were met with fantastic professional staff in the Logan Entertainment Centre.

I want to recognise the Queensland Health workers at the Grand Plaza car park in Browns Plains. I did put my two cents worth in to advocate for this. It was fantastic that Metro South and the health minister's office made vaccinations accessible. They had people giving vaccinations in a tent at the Grand Plaza car park at Browns Plains. People were queued up. Again, everybody from all over Browns Plains were coming to together to make a fantastic contribution. Making vaccinations easy meant that vaccination rates shot up. I can see the member for Algester nodding. I know she was instrumental in getting that centre up and running, as well as the fantastic Acacia Ridge centre, which I know she is really passionate about.

Having vaccinations available at schools was fantastic. When it was made available at Park Ridge State High School or Browns Plains State High School or Yarrabilba, it made an enormous difference to those communities. It meant that teenagers were the ones who were dragging their parents to the high school to get vaccinated, making their return to school even safer. We have seen fantastic results with the return to school. Unlike the member for Mirani, who implied things but did not give facts about a particular school this morning, I rang around all the schools in my electorate. I am pleased to say that all of them reported really great results.

All of them had very few people absent, but what was more important was that they were facing less sickness. That is an incredible credit to the teachers, teacher aides and support staff, because they were taking the advice of Queensland Health and taking care of themselves, which meant that even in the midst of a COVID breakout there were fewer teachers who needed to be replaced due to sickness than during normal times.

We still face challenges ahead, and that is why I also want to recognise the hardworking people at the testing centres. I do not think you did any testing, Mr Deputy Speaker. I want to talk especially about Gary Cully, the principal of Parklands Christian College. When they had their outbreak, this inspirational leader asked all of the community to follow instructions and get tested. I have spoken before about that fantastic school and the way they include the entire community around them. They certainly were inclusive in keeping the rest of Park Ridge and Logan safe by getting their school community—which is an inclusive and fantastic community—to do the right thing and get tested. The Logan West and Browns Plains community health centres did a fantastic job, and let's not forget the Logan Hospital where thousands of people were tested, including myself, during that period. That meant we were doing our bit to detect cases and stop it spreading.

So many people have raised doubts about things they learn on the internet or from a friend. When they ring me I really want to speak to them, and I always take the time to ring them back because I want them to do the best thing they can to keep their community safe. I want to talk about the common sense of the PCR test. I have read papers about PCR tests and I have watched the videos they have pointed me to. I have looked at all of the science behind it, but I want to talk about the common sense of it. In the United States up to one in three PCR tests were positive. At times in Queensland it was one in 50,000 because we knew we did not have it, so the claim that PCR tests have a lot of false positives is disproved by that fact alone. High rates amounts of COVID in the United States resulted in a very high number of positive tests. Unfortunately, they took that fact from the internet and their American friends and said, 'There's a high percentage of false positives,' but because of our successful closure of the borders we had as few as one in 50,000 at times. It is quite clear that using the same standards for PCR tests could produce completely different results.

Furthermore, ordinary Queensland health workers were doing contact tracing. They would reach out to those around them and say, 'Who have you been in contact with?' In cases where they found people who also tested positive on a PCR test they would test positive on a rapid antigen test but then would get quite sick with a severe respiratory illness that did not meet the clinical descriptions of their other illness. I want to say to those people who have doubts about PCR testing in particular that we can look at it as a commonsense thing. We can look at the results of that. It is really important that you tell your friends it is common sense that PCR testing works, your government is doing great things with contact tracing, and if you do have a positive test you can make a difference.

The member for Mirani talked about mental health and the really difficult issues of ECT. I want to recognise the member for Southport and the member for Greenslopes, who spoke so passionately about ECT. This is not easy. It is quite a confronting process. It is not done as a first choice or a flippant choice: it is done with a lot of critical guidelines. Certainly there have been lessons learned from its use in the past and they are very careful about how they do it. As we heard, for some patients it makes an enormous difference. It is a very confronting thing to know that there are non-verbal children who cannot give full consent to the standard doctors require. The committee heard about a really powerful case and I urge every member to read it. It is not easy; I do not pretend that it is. If we are to leave that person trapped in a non-verbal and difficult situation facing enormous mental hurdles and not be able to do what the medical community and parents think is the best course of treatment—and this is certainly true of other consent situations with children who are non-verbal, children who have problems communicating or children who have disabilities—if we are to rule out treatments that we think are the best and can get great outcomes then we are going to hurt ordinary children. Although I recognise that this is not an easy issue, I have confidence that we will use ECT carefully to get better results, especially for those children whom I know we all care about.

I want to speak about the Viewer. I had a very confronting case in my electorate. An elderly gentleman lost his daughter because she was in an accident interstate. She was given a drug that conflicted with a drug she was already on for another condition and it caused her death. If that information is readily available to medical practitioners they can make the best decisions. I am a big supporter of having that information out there, especially in that time where you are too stressed or in such a state that you cannot describe it to the doctor. I commend the bill to the House.