




Speech By  
**Brent Mickelberg**

**MEMBER FOR BUDERIM**

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

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (4.56 pm): I rise to speak to the Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2022. I want to start by thanking every single health worker who stepped up to keep Queenslanders safe over the last two years, often at their own expense working long hours and isolating from their families. I also want to acknowledge the terrible impact COVID-19 has had on the world as a whole and the heartache and disruption that it has caused Queenslanders. Many people have lost loved ones to the virus, leaving holes in families that can never be filled. I acknowledge their pain and my heart goes out to these families. Livelihoods have suffered during the pandemic, with many Queenslanders losing their jobs or watching helplessly as their businesses took blow after blow. It has caused incredible financial difficulty for so many Queenslanders, and the impacts are not lost on me. No corner of Queensland was spared, including my electorate of Buderim.

I recognised that at the start of this pandemic the government was dealing with the unknown and was required to act quickly on an ever-changing and challenging situation which we had not experienced in recent history. What concerns me is that as we enter the third year of this pandemic there is still little transparency when it comes to the health advice. Queenslanders have blindly put their trust in the state government, but we have always said that Queenslanders need more. They need information. They deserve detailed reasons for the government's actions because it greatly impacts them and their futures.

Queenslanders, including constituents in my electorate of Buderim, have done the work. They have sacrificed a hell of a lot over the last two years. They have been separated from their families and friends, they have lost pay cheques, their kids have missed school and their weekend sports and activities. They have been vaccinated, worn masks and isolated, all for the safety of their family, their friends, neighbours and strangers. They stepped up and did what they were told based on the health advice that has never been disclosed to them in full.

I, like my colleagues, have always supported vaccinations against COVID-19. It was frustrating to see the slow rollout of the vaccination program and the mixed messaging from the Premier in particular. We all remember the AstraZeneca debacle when the Premier put doubt in the minds of Queenslanders over its safety and effectiveness despite national expert health advice. As soon as I was eligible, I got vaccinated with AstraZeneca, as have others on this side of the House, and I encouraged others to do the same. Had there been no confusion from the Premier and the then chief health officer, I strongly believe that Queenslanders would have been vaccinated against the virus at a faster rate, but here we are now with more than 90 per cent of the adult population double vaccinated. Queenslanders were told that at 90 per cent there would be a review of restrictions and powers. This has not happened. The goalposts keep shifting. Queenslanders deserve a plan forward and they deserve to know what it is in full detail.

As the shadow minister for small and family business, I have heard some of the most heartbreaking stories from business owners right across Queensland—mum and dad business owners who have taken out second mortgages and are drowning in debt to keep their doors open and keep their employees in a job. Do members know what they tell me has been the hardest part? It is not their own debt; it is telling their staff that they no longer have a job, knowing that their loyal workers are not getting a pay cheque anymore to pay their bills. Frankly, at times it has been heart-wrenching.

We note from Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland surveys that two-thirds of businesses and their staff are experiencing mental health challenges. Small businesses are still suffering. They have lost trade and they have lost confidence. They have not had any confidence in the last couple of years due to the confusion and the inconsistencies. A detailed plan from the state government could help restore confidence so businesses know what to expect and how to handle situations as they arise. The rushed last-minute approach has not served anyone well.