




Speech By  
**Cynthia Lui**

**MEMBER FOR COOK**

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

 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (5.21 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2022. On behalf of my communities, I want to extend my gratitude and appreciation to our Premier and to the former chief health officer, Dr Jeannette Young, for their strong leadership in making tough decisions under very extreme circumstances to keep Queenslanders safe. With the strength demonstrated by our Premier and the strong health advice from our CHO, the Palaszczuk government took nothing for granted and made sure that no stones were left unturned when it came to making important decisions about how to respond to this global health emergency in a swift and decisive manner. I offer acknowledgement to former health minister Steven Miles, current health minister Yvette D'Ath, cabinet ministers and all members of parliament who stepped up to the plate and were determined to work together to keep COVID out.

Queensland's effort would not have been possible if it were not for our frontline health heroes. Our health heroes stepped up for Queensland and were prepared to be at the coalface of this pandemic to protect and to fight for Queensland. I acknowledge all of the frontline workers in my electorate for their hard work and commitment to keeping the communities in the Cook electorate safe.

From my experience of working across my electorate, people were searching for answers, reassurance and certainty for the future. I think what played out in the media day in and day out swayed the views of many people right across the state. I think the stark reality of seeing mass sickness and death across the globe was just a glimpse of the reality of what could become of our community and our state. We knew that it would be only a matter of time before COVID came knocking on our door, and that it did. Communities in Cape York and Torres Strait were deemed the most vulnerable communities, and the outbreak of COVID-19, exacerbated by distance and isolation, would have had a devastating impact on people living in the region.

On 29 January 2020, Queensland declared a public health emergency under section 319 of the Public Health Act 2005 due to the outbreak of COVID-19 in China and its pandemic potential due to the cases spreading to other countries and the public health implications within Queensland resulting from recently arrived travellers from the epicentre of the outbreak. The public health emergency was declared for all of Queensland under section 323 of the Public Health Act. The declared public health emergency was extended until 31 December 2020 through the making of several regulations and may need to be further extended. In early 2020, the Legislative Assembly also passed several pieces of legislation to support the Queensland government's health response to COVID-19 and to make amendments to chapter 8 of the Public Health Act.

I want to talk about some of the personal experiences across the Cook electorate and the measures that were put in place, supported by this public health legislation, which enabled my communities to be kept safe. We saw snap lockdowns and other restrictions across my electorate. There was a biosecurity restriction in place. I want to thank and congratulate my communities for abiding

by the many measures in terms of mask wearing, hand sanitising—all of the practical measures that we were encouraging communities to take. I think none of this would have been possible without the support of all Queenslanders working together to keep each other safe. At the end of the day, I think our role here was to facilitate measures that would only help Queenslanders to do that.

The Public Health (Declared Public Health Emergencies) Amendment Act, which received assent in February 2020, increased powers for emergency officers and the Chief Health Officer to limit and respond to the spread of COVID-19 in Queensland. The Public Health and Other Legislation (Public Health Emergency) Amendment Act 2020, which received assent on 19 March 2020, enabled the chief executive to delegate their powers to the Chief Health Officer or a person with expertise or experience in public health issues, improving the operation of provisions enabling emergency officers to support the Queensland government's response to COVID-19.

There were many good measures put into place. I respect the views of all of the people in my electorate—those who supported the legislation and those who opposed it. I think the position we are in now, in coming through this global pandemic, is testament to the good job the Queensland government did to protect all communities across the state.

I would like to acknowledge the chair of the Community Support and Services Committee, my fellow committee members, Hansard and the committee secretariat for their hard work in examining this vital bill. It is an important one for Queensland and it is going to further support us in this journey through this global pandemic. I commend the bill to the House.