




Speech By  
**Joan Pease**

**MEMBER FOR LYTTON**

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Record of Proceedings, 25 October 2022

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

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (5.09 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Public Health and Other Legislation (COVID-19 Management) Amendment Bill 2022. I do not often agree with the member for Mudgeeraba, but I would like to echo her words acknowledging the great work of frontline workers and I acknowledge the great work that she and her family contributed to the health system. All of our frontline workers put themselves out each and every day and worked tirelessly to ensure Queenslanders were safe. I also acknowledge the great work of the people behind those frontline workers, their families, who supported them. The administration in Queensland Health and across the broader sector also made sure that we were able to work with COVID and deliver the best outcomes.

Like my colleague the member for Thuringowa, I would like to acknowledge the great stewardship of our Premier, the Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk, for her outstanding leadership during a huge time of crisis in not just Queensland but the entire world. I also acknowledge our current and past health ministers and our current and past chief health officers.

From the very start, we had a plan. The Palaszczuk government had a plan and it is a plan that we stuck to. It was a plan to minimise community transmission, a plan to minimise hospitalisation and a plan to minimise deaths. It was a plan that had at its very heart the protection of Queenslanders and our economy. This plan asked a lot of Queenslanders. It asked us to work together until certain milestones were achieved, and Queenslanders stepped up to the mark and they did that. Queenslanders are amazing and I thank them for that.

The temporary emergency legislative framework in the Public Health Act 2005 to support our response to COVID-19 is due to expire on 31 October 2022. This bill introduces limited, temporary legislative powers that will provide a step-down approach to managing the pandemic's response. It will enable Queensland to respond rapidly to COVID-19 risks and nationally manage COVID-19 until October 2023.

The view of those opposite is out of step with every other jurisdiction in Australia, but of course the LNP know all about being irresponsible when it comes to managing the pandemic—from calling for the borders to be opened not once but 64 times before our COVID vaccine rollout, to passing people over the border. How irresponsible of our leaders in our community; it is a disgrace. While we know that the member for Broadwater does not support our frontline workers, he was also at the front line when it came to attacking Dr Jeannette Young. Who can forget the moment he referred to her as a punch-drunk bureaucrat? The LNP do not want to support this framework because they do not want to acknowledge the continued existence of COVID-19.

This bill provides for management of COVID-19 within the notifiable conditions framework of the Public Health Act, with a new temporary framework that will enable the Chief Health Officer: to make public health directions about a limited range of matters; to provide threshold conditions that must be met before a decision can be issued; and to implement additional safeguards and increased scrutiny of

directions and provide limited powers for authorised persons to enforce public health directions. We will be relying on expert health advice from appropriately qualified people. The threshold conditions ensure that such a public health direction can only be issued if the Chief Health Officer reasonably believes it is necessary to prevent or respond to a serious risk to the public health system of the community as a result of COVID-19 or to give effect to a decision or agreement of the National Cabinet or advice from expert bodies, such as the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee or the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation.

The Palaszczuk government has led the nation in its measured response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Before vaccines became widely available, we ensured that there was minimal community transmission. This ensured that we could keep our economy open and prevent the extended lockdowns that we saw in places like Victoria and New South Wales. As I have said, it also meant that we were able to save many people's lives. Our vaccine rollout ensured that we were able to open our borders in a safe, considered and measured way.

The COVID-19 Vaccine Plan to Unite Families meant that we could reunite families in a safe manner and manage the first COVID-19 wave in a way that did not overwhelm our hospital system. I thank all Queenslanders for undertaking the vaccination program, because this strong level of vaccination coverage in Queensland ensured that we could withstand not just the first wave but the second and third Omicron waves. It supported our health system, and our strong management of the pandemic has laid the basis for Queensland to be Australia's strongest mainland economy.

We are now at the next phase of our plan. We recognise we are in a new phase of the pandemic that requires a different response to the one we have historically adopted. We know that we cannot just do away with a pandemic framework; that would be irresponsible. No matter how fatigued by the pandemic we may be, it would be totally irresponsible to adopt the LNP's suggestion to remove any pandemic management framework. As I have said, we know how out of step that is with the other jurisdictions in Australia. The LNP do not want to support this framework so I wonder if they acknowledge the continued existence of COVID-19.

I acknowledge the work of the committee secretariat, my colleagues on the committee and all of those who made submissions. Again, I thank the outstanding frontline workers who each and every day put themselves at potential risk and threat and turn up to work. I commend the bill to the House.