




Speech By
Michael Hart

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

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

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (12.21 pm): I rise to talk about the Public Health and Other Legislation (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2022. In doing so, I want to thank the health staff—our doctors, our nurses and in particular our ambulance officers. They have borne the brunt of this pandemic. They have done the hard work to see us through this, and they certainly deserve our support. Businesses have also done the hard work because of the impact that COVID has had on them over the last two years.

There is no doubt that COVID has had a severe impact on businesses, so why would we leave this legislation to the last minute when this is about to expire? If this was so important to the minister and the government, why are we leaving it to the last minute? We are truncating the whole committee process by only allowing 31 days for the committee to examine this, by only allowing two weeks for submissions and by only allowing the health department to come before the committee and answer questions for less than an hour. Of course, non-government members only get half of that time, so it was actually half an hour for non-government members to talk to the health department about this bill.

Under this bill as it currently stands, there is no requirement for public health officials to formally answer questions or for the restrictions to be scrutinised by the Queensland parliament. Should the bill be passed without amendment, it will mean that the bill is not scrutinised by the parliament for six months. I believe that is completely unacceptable. The minister says that the opposition wants to see more health advice. I just want to see some health advice. Any health advice would be fantastic. The government tells us that it relies on advice when it sets its policy, but that advice has not been shown to any of us. It has not been shown to the committee. In fact, when the committee met, the then director-general, Dr John Wakefield, was asked to provide the committee with the health advice and he said—

... decisions about release of information in that regard are a matter for the minister and a matter for government.

So why was the minister not present at the committee hearing so she could give that feedback to the committee, answer the question and possibly release that information? We are seeing this constantly—that committees are stopped from getting the information they need in order to do their job, and I have raised this in the parliament before. As an example, meeting minutes and correspondence between the minister and the Chief Health Officer in Victoria are routinely released by the government when new health directives are issued. The opposition is moving an amendment to establish a six-person parliamentary oversight committee chaired by a non-government member, and I fully support that amendment.

I want to tackle a couple of things that the member before me said. She quite clearly said that none of the members on this side had anything to say supporting vaccinations. That is the problem with this government—they reinvent history. The minister obviously has not been listening to the things that we have been saying on this side of the House when it comes to vaccinations. I have been encouraging everybody in my electorate to get vaccinated for months. As well as that, the minister said that we spoke 64 times about opening the border. I can tell the House that I certainly did because the Gold Coast

Airport was shut for a long time. They went from 80 flights a day to zero. In a place that relies completely on tourism, the borders were closed. What did the government do when I put up that billboard that called for the borders to be opened? They opened the borders.

Ms King interjected.

Mr HART: I take that interjection from the member for Pumicestone, who I understand is on a warning.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): Member for Burleigh, thank you, I do not need your assistance.

Mr HART: The government opened the borders. This is what they do. They reinvent history. They have completely forgotten that they opened the borders. In considering my position on this bill and how I have voted in the past, my basic philosophy of life is a liberal philosophy. In my maiden speech, which I have quoted in this House a number of times, I said—

... I place on the record my overriding philosophies of life. The opinions and decisions I make in this place will reflect those philosophies.

And I stick with that. I said—

I believe in the right of people to make their own choices in life.

This is from my maiden speech 10 years ago. I said—

Regardless of whether or not I agree with them, they have a right to their own opinion and their own choices. I believe in small government with minimal regulation. I believe in a hand up from government, not a handout. In basic terms, I believe good government needs to ensure the population is secure from interference from the action of others. If a government does just that one thing, I believe it succeeds.

I voted in the past on extensions to this based purely on that last part—that 'I believe good government needs to ensure the population is secure from interference from the action of others'. It was appropriate previously to support these actions that the government were taking when they closed down businesses, they closed our borders and they did everything else because we were protecting some of our population from the rest of the population. Now that the state has reached a 90 per cent vaccination level, I believe my support for these laws has expired because my conclusion is that we no longer need to secure our population from the interference of others.

The population has had its opportunity to be vaccinated. While I encourage everyone to be vaccinated—and I want that on the record: that I encourage everyone to be vaccinated—as I am and my family is and just about everybody I know is, those people who have decided not to be vaccinated have a right to that choice. The government has failed to prove unvaccinated people are a danger to others. If such proof is in the health advice, let us see that. Otherwise, let us get on with our lives. I will not be supporting this bill.