




Speech By
Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR HILL

Record of Proceedings, 25 October 2022

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

 **Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (7.38 pm): I rise to give my contribution to the Public Health and Other Legislation (COVID-19 Management) Amendment Bill. I acknowledge that, through this bill, the government is attempting to restore the Public Health Act to its pre-pandemic operation and remove certain powers granted to the CHO. However, this bill gives the government the power to continue vaccination mandates until 31 October 2023. I really truly believe that if there were an election in October 2023 we would not be debating this bill because the government would get rid of the mandates so it did not get Queenslanders offside.

The negatives of the mandates and the pressure they place on Queenslanders through loss of jobs and a failing healthcare system, with thousands of healthcare workers still out of work, far outweigh any perceived positives of keeping them, particularly considering the many Queenslanders who have had COVID-19 now have a natural immunity and, according to the government's own modelling, the peak has now passed. So why is the government still continuing with these mandates? It is about a refusal to give up power regardless of the rights of Queenslanders and the long-term consequences of the mandates.

In their submission to the committee, the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties—they used to be the state government's friends but they are not now—states—

Mandatory vaccination—our position has been that respect of bodily integrity requires that any vaccination mandate contained a conscientious objection provision.

It did not. The submission continues—

However, when the virus is now circulating broadly in the community and vaccination clearly has only limited impact on transmissibility, we cannot see the rationale for vaccination mandates.

That is backed up by the Pfizer CEO, who stated that Pfizer did not test whether its vaccine stopped transmission. I do not know why we are still in the House debating a bill that allows mandates to continue for another year.

I am sure every government member would have read and been briefed on the independent review of Australia's response to COVID-19 entitled *Fault lines*. I table the independent report.

Tabled paper: Document, dated 20 October 2022, by Mr Peter Shergold AC, Ms Jillian Broadbent ACT, Ms Isobel Marshall and Mr Peter Varghese AO, titled 'Fault Lines—An independent review into Australia's response to COVID-19' [1742](#).

That independent report should be examined without prejudice. It is critical to understand the problems with the government's overreach, both in the past and in this debate. The same government is trying to make another mistake by extending the period for vaccination mandates. The report states—

There were too many instances in which government regulations and their enforcement went beyond what was required to control the spread of the virus, even when based on the information available at the time. Such overreach undermined public trust and confidence in the institutions that are vital to effective crisis response.

It further states—

These actions could have been avoided if we had built fairness into our planning decisions and introduced compassion into their implementation.

The report states—

Partly as a consequence, implementation was often too harsh, too inflexible, too slow to adapt and too dismissive of basic rights.

The report also states—

Rates of domestic violence increased. Almost 20 per cent of women in domestic relationships in 2020 experienced emotionally abusive, harassing and controlling behaviours for the first time.

And further—

Mental health across the community has been devastated by the pandemic. Young people have been particularly affected: 52 per cent of Australians aged 18—24 have reported that their mental health declined during the pandemic.

The report also states—

Government regulations and enforcement too often went beyond what was required to control the spread of the virus, and sometimes lacked discretion.

And further—

Regional communities with no COVID-19 cases were locked down and schools closed.

Many of those communities were in the electorate of the member for Traeger.

The reality is that Queenslanders have learned to live with COVID so all of the powers granted to the government should now be removed. People are over being jabbed, isolated and jobless. They are over these extended powers. I completely oppose this bill.