




Speech By
Hon. Lance McCallum

MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA

Record of Proceedings, 11 September 2024

MOTION

COVID 19, Response Review

 **Hon. LR McCALLUM** (Bundamba—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (4.54 pm): I rise in support of the amendment. During one of the most challenging periods in living memory, it was Labor that protected the jobs, livelihoods and small businesses of Queensland. When the world, including the Sunshine Coast, was gripped by uncertainty, here in Queensland Labor led with clarity and purpose. There were others that dithered, but we acted swiftly to save lives, protect businesses and keep Queenslanders in work. Our world-leading health response did not just keep the virus at bay; it also kept our economy moving. It did what mattered—whether it was for the Sunshine Coast, for my community of Bundamba and the City of Ipswich, or for all of Queensland.

I believe that Queenslanders will never forget that it was the LNP who called for the borders to be thrown open, putting lives and livelihoods at risk. It was Labor's steady hand that kept our state safe. While others were forced to shut down for months, Queenslanders were able to stay at work, businesses were able to survive and keep their doors open—some thrived—and families were able to continue to put food on the table. When the pandemic hit, we moved quickly to protect jobs and the health of Queenslanders.

Our COVID-19 economic recovery plan invested \$15.2 billion in recovery initiatives. That was real money put into the pockets of workers, small businesses and the industries that were hardest hit. Our payroll tax deferrals, job support loans and targeted grants helped businesses keep staff on during the most difficult days. We worked directly with employers, industries, unions and small business owners to ensure that our response was what Queenslanders needed at the time. As a result, thousands of jobs were saved—jobs that could have been lost under the reckless calls of those like the LNP.

Since the pandemic we have created over 35,000 more jobs on the Sunshine Coast alone. ABS data clearly shows that Queensland is the economic and job creation powerhouse of the nation. We have created more jobs than any other state or territory since the pandemic. We have also funded 2,300 free TAFE places on the coast to get more locals into good jobs, with nursing and aged care topping the list. It was not just about protecting jobs. We laid the foundation for a strong recovery for our small business community.

Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, so we made sure they were supported every step of the way. Through our COVID-19 Jobs Support Loan Scheme and our business support package, Labor stood shoulder to shoulder with the tens of thousands of small businesses that were doing it tough. We delivered real outcomes, including grants, that allowed businesses to pivot, innovate and survive. I am sure that many in this place recall the incredible ability and resilience of our businesses to adapt during that time. We had craft brewers become manufacturers of hand sanitiser. There were similar examples of businesses being able to pivot thanks to the support of Labor at the time.

For the people of Noosa and its over 6,900 businesses, our Big Plans for Small Business Strategy delivered almost half a million dollars in direct grant support. We also provided \$210 million in payroll tax relief to more than 12,000 small- and medium-sized businesses to help them recover. The LNP and others might not like it, but these measures were essential to keep our businesses afloat. Under new Premier Steven Miles, we are turning a page and looking to the future. Queenslanders know that they can trust Labor when times are tough. We did it during the pandemic and we will back Queenslanders to a bright future.

(Time expired)