

Question on Notice
No. 1244
Asked on 28 October 2022

Ms S Bolton asked Premier and Minister for the Olympics (Hon. A Palaszczuk)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the recommendations in ‘Fault line’s - An Independent Review into Australia’s Response to COVID 19’—

Will the Premier commit to reviewing the recommendations for improvements Queensland could implement as part of its response to COVID 19 and pandemics?

ANSWER:

Queensland’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic, based on the expert health advice of the Chief Health Officer, saved countless lives and livelihoods. However, there is always room for improvement and the Queensland Government will continue to work to ensure we are prepared for the ongoing management of COVID-19 and the emergence of future pandemics.

I acknowledge release of the report, *‘Fault lines - An Independent Review into Australia’s Response to COVID-19’* (The Review), by Peter Shergold AC, Jillian Broadbent AC, Isobel Marshall, and Peter Varghese.

I note that The Review commends Queensland’s existing disaster management framework as an effective tool in Queensland’s response to COVID-19. This framework has stood Queensland in good stead and has been well tested during periods of natural disasters.

The Review comments on the provision of economic supports during the pandemic, although it does not detail the economic stimulus provided by state governments.

I can advise that, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Queensland Government has committed to a broad range of economic initiatives that supplemented the health response, such as:

- \$500 million for the Worker Assistance Package
- \$1 billion Industry Support Package
- \$1.3 billion in payroll tax and land tax refunds, waivers, exemptions, and deferrals
- \$196 million Small Business COVID-19 Adaptation Grants
- \$100 million to provide a \$500 electricity rebate for small-medium businesses
- \$1 billion in loans to businesses of up to \$250,000, with 86 per cent going towards small businesses, and
- \$400 million accelerated works package.

In terms of the health response, my Government acted throughout the crisis on the basis of the advice of the Chief Health Officer. Queensland’s strategy of suppressing the virus until more than 90 per cent of the adult population were vaccinated proved to be extremely effective in terms of minimising deaths, hospitalisations, and intensive care admissions. This strategy was also central to ensuring students’ continued engagement in the education system and in protecting the broader economy.

I note therefore, that many of the report's comments do not reflect what happened in Queensland. For example, Queensland did not close schools for extended periods of time, we did not impose curfews, and we did not regularly impose lockdowns. When we were required to initiate lockdowns for the safety of the community, they were short, sharp, and we lifted restrictions as soon as it was safe to do so.

By effectively managing the health response and promptly delivering on our economic recovery plan, we kept Queensland's economy open and we kept Queenslanders safe.