




Speech By
Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

Record of Proceedings, 5 February 2020

MOTION

Coronavirus

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (11.19 am): I rise to address the motion moved by the minister. In so doing, I share the concerns of my colleagues in the LNP regarding the global health emergency with respect to the novel coronavirus. I extend my sympathies and those of the LNP team to the families of the victims who have already lost their lives and to those who are currently suffering from the ravages of this disease and are being treated not only in Queensland and Australia but also across the world. I also extend the concern and sympathy of this side of the House to businesses, particularly tourism and hospitality businesses, the length and breadth of Queensland that are suffering due to the economic impact of this virus.

There is no question that the impacts of this virus have only just started to be felt and it could potentially be many months before we have a full understanding of the impacts. It requires all levels of government—Commonwealth, state and local—to work together to ensure we not only address this initial outbreak and take the medical steps required to isolate those who are suffering from the virus to ensure it does not spread further but also measure and respond to the impacts on our economy in Queensland.

Let me reject the comments made by the minister that somehow this must become a politicised Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements argument. Labor has taken a global health emergency, politicised it and reached a new low in politics in this nation. We have known for some time that any time those opposite are struggling for relevance, are struggling to get a message out to the state—let's face it, they have no message for the state because there is no economic focus on this state and that is why we were languishing at the bottom of league tables before this virus even hit—or are in political strife, they blame the federal government.

Let us be clear, no global health emergency has ever been declared a disaster under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. Why? They are not covered. Did former premier Peter Beattie call on John Howard to instigate Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements when the severe acute respiratory syndrome, SARS, hit this nation in 2002? No. More importantly, did former premier Campbell Newman go cap in hand to then Labor prime minister Kevin Rudd and demand that the response to the human swine influenza, H1N1, be declared a disaster and therefore receive disaster recovery funding? No.

These global health emergencies do not fit under disaster recovery funding. Do they require a coordinated response from the Commonwealth and the state? They sure do. Through the course of these kinds of emergencies over the last two decades both sides of politics have acknowledged that they fall outside the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. This is a new low. Just because they are broke and they have no clue how to manage this state it does not mean they need to politicise human suffering and tragedy. It is not necessary.

The Commonwealth government stands ready to work alongside this state government. They will do what is necessary to ensure that not only the medical emergency is addressed but also the economic impacts are mitigated and responded to. It does not require this kind of politicisation nor does it require a change to the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements that have stood this nation in good stead through thick and thin for centuries. This needs to stop. The Labor Party needs to stop playing politics with people's lives and start acting like the government of this state and do the job they were elected to do.