

Media Release

DAVID DAVIS MP

Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council

Leader of the Liberal Party in the Legislative Council

Shadow Minister for Public Transport (Metropolitan) and Transport Infrastructure

Shadow Minister for Equality, Federal-State Relations, Priority Precincts and the Arts

State Member for Southern Metropolitan Region

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Liberal Nationals oppose Andrews' power grab

Victorians deserve transparency and not to have their lives turned upside down at Daniel Andrews' whim. We will fight to get them that.

The Liberal Nationals will oppose the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (State of Emergency Extension) Bill 2021, unless crucial amendments are made.

This Bill is another excessive power grab by Daniel Andrews. Victoria's arrogant Premier cannot be given unbridled power, without serious checks and balances.

It is our strong view that states of emergency should not be indefinite, or able to be extended for lengthy periods.

The Liberal Nationals will move to confine state of emergency extensions to a month-to-month basis and then only with the agreement of both Houses of Parliament.

Daniel Andrews is demanding a nine-month extension to his extraordinary powers over the lives and liberties of Victorians until December. This is an absurd overreach.

The Liberal Nationals' amendments will also:

- Demand tough transparency and accountability measures;
- Require Parliament to sit;
- Require the immediate tabling of briefings provided to the Chief Health Officer supporting each individual direction made under the state of emergency powers;
- Insist that MPs be provided with full detailed briefings; and
- In line with all other legislation, provide for disallowance by Parliament of harsh or restrictive Public Health Orders that go too far.

These measures will ensure the government is required to provide swiftly to the Parliament, detailed reasons for each and every Public Health Order made.

Despite orders of the Upper House on 2 September 2020, 16 September 2020 and 30 October 2020 to provide copies of critical briefings on Public Health Orders to the Parliament, Daniel Andrews has thumbed his nose at the accountability most Victorians would expect. Why the secrecy?

The Liberal Nationals will be looking for the support of the minor parties and independents in the Parliament to amend the State of Emergency Bill, putting in place checks and balances and proper scrutiny of the draconian actions undertaken using the Bill's powers.

Comments attributable to the Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council, David Davis:

"With massive and overriding powers that are provided to Daniel Andrews through a State of Emergency, comes matching responsibility and an enhanced need for accountability and scrutiny. Daniel Andrews needs to be held on a tight leash.

"Surely, it is not too much to ask, where Andrews is taking on almost dictatorial powers, that he should be forced to explain by the release of key background documents.

"Victorians who are having the liberties restricted, Victorians who have had their businesses closed and Victorians who have lost their jobs, have a right to know the full reasons."