



Petition

Registration No.	13
Title	Opposing the passing of the Public and Environmental Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2022
Presented on	10 May 2022
Presented by	Member for Spillett
Referred to	Chief Minister and Public Accounts Committee
Assembly debate	If the Committee recommends the Petition be debated it will appear on the Notice Paper
Date referred	10 May 2022
Response due	1 September 2022
Response received	22 August 2022
Response presented	30 August 2022

Petition

WE THE UNDERSIGNED RESPECTFULLY SHOWETH

We the undersigned are opposed to the passing of the Public and Environmental Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 ('the Bill'), introduced to NT parliament on 23 March 2022 by Minister for Health, Ms Natasha Fyles.

The proposed amendments of the CHO's powers, as articulated in Division 2A of the Bill, are a gross overreach and go well beyond the scope of purpose the original legislation was implemented for. This purpose of the legislation is evidenced in the second reading speech of 2013.

The new amendments go over and above what could reasonably be considered health recommendations, and this is made clear in section 57G of the Bill which grants the CHO unfettered power to enter a Territorian's place of residence without a warrant.

The CHO has the ability to make health recommendations as he or she deem appropriate with very little to zero reporting requirements or review mechanisms for a lengthy period of two years, effectively leaving Territorians in the dark.

As articulated in the British Medical Journal, 'Transparency is the key to building trust and an important route to answering people's legitimate questions about the efficacy and safety of vaccines and treatments and the clinical and public health policies established for their use'.

YOUR PETITIONERS THEREFORE HUMBLY PRAY THAT

The Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory opposes the passing of the Public and Environmental Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 in its entirety.

Response

On 18 March 2020, in response to the CoVID-19 pandemic, I as the Minister for Health, declared a public health emergency under the *Public and Environmental Health Act 2011* (the Act). The declaration of a public health emergency allowed the Chief Health Officer (CHO) to issue Directions for the management of the emergency. CHO Directions remained in force while the emergency declaration was in place. The emergency declaration expired at 11.59 pm on 15 June 2022.

In order to move to a model whereby CHO Directions can be issued and enforced without a declared public health emergency, amendments to the Act were required. The amendments enabled the ongoing management of the pandemic in a two year period following the end of the emergency declaration. The amendments have allowed for some CHO Directions to be retained and for the creation of new Directions as required in the post-emergency period in consultation with specified Ministers. The two year period accounts for the possible emergence of new variants of concern and allows for a transition to a time where COVID-19 Directions are no longer necessary.

I am comfortable and supportive of the fact that over the COVID-19 pandemic period, the CHO has put the health and safety of Territorians as a priority and at the forefront of his decision making. These amendments will assist us to learn to live with CoVID-19.