



Speech by

**Hon. ANNA BLIGH**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE**

Hansard Tuesday, 9 October 2007

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## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

### **Equine Influenza**

**Hon. AM BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier) (9.51 am): The outbreak of equine influenza has been an economic body blow to thousands of Queenslanders who depend on the state's diverse horse industry for their living. Although losses incurred by Queensland's horse racing industry have dominated media coverage, my government is acutely aware that the pain is far more widespread and has ensured that help is being delivered where it is needed most.

I want to assure members that assistance is getting through to families and individuals who are suffering hardship, and I urge anyone in difficulty to contact the equine influenza hotline on 132523 or to visit one of the state government's network of one-stop shops. In the past week the government's one-stop shops in Brisbane, the Gold Coast and Toowoomba, and nine mobile units targeting equine influenza hot spots, have provided \$120,000 in one-off grants to more than 500 people struggling to afford basics such as food, clothing and medical expenses or their rent. All of these shops are open every day, and in the past week units have been mobilised to help people in Rosewood, Tamborine, Gympie, Landsborough, Caboolture, Warwick, Ipswich and Rocklea. As well, more than 1,250 people have contacted the hotline for help in the past 10 days, and we will use these calls to direct the mobile units to where the help is needed.

The government response has been coordinated by a high-level task force chaired by my director-general, Ken Smith, that includes representation from government and industry. As of last Friday the task force has been joined by RNA President, Dr Vivian Edwards, who will ensure that the thousands of people in the non-racing horse industry have a direct voice at the highest levels. I thank Dr Edwards for his participation and assistance. Already his presence has helped to ensure that the non-racing industry is also at the forefront of the response.

Queensland Racing has advised that an economic impact statement being quantified by PricewaterhouseCoopers will now be broadened to include all sections of the horse industry. This information is being collated for a potential class action against the federal government in relation to this insidious disease entering Australia.

On another front, I am pleased to inform the House that following my direct appeal to the Prime Minister in the last couple of days, the federal government has resolved to make an additional 17,000 doses of vaccine available to high-value breeding horses in the racing and non-racing sectors. The first priority is to vaccinate horses that make a significant contribution to the economy and to people's livelihoods.

As in the case with our overall response to equine influenza, we will not favour one group over another but we will work to take a common-sense, responsible approach that will prepare the way for a quicker economic recovery for the broader equine industry.