



Speech By  
**Hon. Cameron Dick**


**MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE**

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Record of Proceedings, 21 May 2015

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Hervey Bay Hospital, Legionella**

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (9.50 am): I wish to inform the House of events at Hervey Bay Hospital, where preliminary testing has uncovered higher than normal levels of legionella. While regular testing for legionella is common practice, cases where levels are higher than usual warrant further investigation. Tests are now being undertaken at multiple sites within the hospital, and a process has been put in place to ensure the complete safety of all patients and staff. As part of that process, and to ensure a careful, precautionary approach is taken, I am advised by the Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service that patients will receive sponge baths in all areas of the hospital, tap water will not be used for invasive procedures and bottled drinking water will be provided for patients.

Corrective action is being taken by the hospital to flush out the water reticulation system. I am advised that there will be multiple flushes of the water system with scalding water to ensure that there can be no systemic bacterial growth in the lines. The Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service will also examine existing maintenance and monitoring programs. It follows that there will be some inconvenience while we wait for results from the second round of testing, but water quality has to be one of our highest priorities.

There have also been reports of the death of a patient at Hervey Bay Hospital who was found to have had legionella. It is important to remember that legionella bacteria is always present in the environment and is often found in low concentrations in water supplies. It can be found in air-conditioning cooling towers, hot or warm water systems, showerheads, spa baths, creeks, soil and potting mix. Last year we saw 44 cases of legionella in Queensland, most of which were community acquired. The symptoms are similar to those of respiratory infections, and person-to-person transmission does not occur. In this particular case, the patient's death is currently being investigated by the Coroner.

I am sorry for any inconvenience to staff, patients and the community as the Hervey Bay Hospital undertakes its rigorous water-testing process and cautionary measures, but patient safety must be our top priority. I am advised that the Hervey Bay Hospital is doing all it can to get back to normal operations as soon as possible.