




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MACKAY

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**PUBLIC HEALTH (CHILD CARE VACCINATION) AND OTHER LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (5.07 pm): I rise to speak in favour of this bill. Childhood immunisation is a very serious issue. It is all about children. We must protect children: they are the most vulnerable people in the community.

I can remember the days when parents encouraged their kids to go out and play with their neighbours when they had measles, mumps or chicken pox. Once upon a time it was a rite of passage. You would tick off the childhood diseases as you got them and parents would say, 'That is finished in my family.' I have friends who experienced complications from those childhood diseases. We know that it is very serious. It is not the case that once it is over and the spots have disappeared you will be safe for the rest of your life. You do not know when it is going to come back.

As a former teacher I know how quickly illness can spread through the classroom. Once one child comes to school with a tummy bug, it quickly spreads throughout the whole classroom, especially with small children. I know that the utmost standards of hygiene are practised in day care centres. Even with very high standards of hygiene, the way small children play with each other means that they have physical contact all the time, so it is very hard to stop children from spreading diseases to each other. We do need to make sure all of our young children are immunised.

I will relate the experience of a colleague. They were very excited to show off their first-born child. They took their new baby to visit friends and to shopping centres, as all young parents do, because they were so excited to have their new baby. At two weeks the baby contracted whooping cough. At two weeks the baby was too young to be immunised. That family paid the ultimate price because of the selfish behaviour of some adults around them who refused to immunise their children. When there is a loss of a young baby such as that, parents do not recover. That family is scarred for the rest of their lives.

I urge all parents to immunise their children. Even if their children do not contract a disease, they may carry the virus and they do not know who they are going to spread it to. One death of a child is one too many and I urge everybody to support this bill.