




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Zika Virus

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (2.30 pm): Queensland is preparing for the fight against Zika. Members would be aware that the Zika virus is currently spreading in certain tropical regions around the globe. The illness caused by the virus is usually mild, with symptoms including fever, rash, joint pain and conjunctivitis. There are also concerns about the impact that the virus may have on pregnant women.

Zika virus is a mosquito borne disease which is transmitted to humans via a bite by an infected mosquito, including the species *Aedes aegypti*, which is found only in North Queensland. The same mosquito is responsible for the spread of dengue fever. So far there have been seven confirmed cases of Zika in Queensland. In every case the person has brought the virus in from overseas. There is no record of any transmission of the virus anywhere in Australia.

I stress that Zika is not a new virus. In Queensland we had 10 reported cases of the virus in 2014-15. We are expecting a higher number this year, as more people are likely to be tested for the virus. The expert advice remains that Zika virus is not currently circulating in Queensland, and we intend to do what we can, along with other levels of government, to keep it that way.

On 4 February I convened a Zika preparedness round table to discuss what measures were already in place and what new measures we may need to consider. We will spend \$400,000 to increase the capacity of our laboratories, including one in Townsville, to rapidly test for Zika virus in humans. This will be the first time that testing for the Zika virus in humans will occur in North Queensland, and it will be possible from March this year. Queensland Health will also spend around \$1 million to develop a new campaign to educate people on the vital role they can play in reducing the spread of mosquitos and mosquito borne diseases. This campaign will target both dengue and Zika and, by extension, other mosquito borne diseases.

A key message that all members of this place can take back to their electorates concerns people who are returning from travelling in areas affected by Zika around the world. If anyone feels unwell, please tell them to immediately see a GP. Do not leave it to chance; get tested and find out. Although we have solid defences in place against mosquitos and mosquito borne diseases like Zika in Queensland, we are doing what we can to be ready.