




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) (9.47 am): This morning Queensland Health authorities in Rockhampton are stepping up the fight against the Zika virus. Yesterday a man tested positive for the disease after recently returning from South America. This is the eighth confirmed Zika case in Queensland this year.

I am advised that the man has spent some time at the Globe Hotel in Depot Hill, and our investigations reveal that the mosquito species that can carry the disease, *Aedes aegypti*, has been present near the hotel. I want to be clear: there is no evidence that Zika virus is in mosquitoes in the area. We want to keep it that way. However, it is possible there may be a small number of mosquitoes present in the area, following the recent case, which may be infected. This is why we are undertaking urgent mosquito control, in conjunction with local government, as it is possible there may be a small number of infected mosquitoes present in the area following the recent case.

Spraying to kill the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito began in the immediate vicinity of the hotel yesterday, and spraying will continue this morning in the yards and homes of businesses within a 200-metre radius of the hotel. This is designed to help contain the mosquito and reduce the likelihood of a local outbreak. The spraying is safe for people including women who may be pregnant. Spraying is usually done with the cooperation of the home and business owner, but we have the option of issuing a public health order which will enable sprayers to enter premises for the purposes of mosquito control if necessary.

We are working closely with the Rockhampton Regional Council—and I thank it for its support and its work—and we will be providing further information to GPs in the area today about the role that they can play. One of our best public health tools is public communication. I want pregnant Queenslanders to know that we are committed to talking to them—empathetically, sensibly and with clear information that is backed by science. I stress that at the moment there is no local outbreak of Zika. I am advised by Queensland Health that the risk of any pregnant woman here contracting Zika virus and having a baby affected by microcephaly to be exceedingly small. If anyone in the affected area is unwell and concerned, they should visit their GP to discuss testing options for the disease, and any pregnant women in the area who may be concerned should also visit their local GP to discuss testing options.

In terms of testing, I want to announce a new measure to bolster our statewide fight against Zika. From Monday every Queenslanders who is tested for dengue fever will automatically be tested for Zika virus. Both diseases are carried by the same mosquito, and testing for dengue and Zika at the same time is good health care and smart science. Testing for both diseases at the same time will also potentially give us a head start in identifying any local outbreak of Zika virus in Queensland. On 15 February I wrote to the federal health minister, Sussan Ley, seeking her support for federal funding for

additional spraying and vector control at airports. I am advised that there is good cooperation between officials, but I am yet to receive a response from the federal health minister. I hope this will be forthcoming as soon as possible as it is essential that all levels of government do their bit.