




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

Record of Proceedings, 17 March 2016

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Health

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (9.51 am): As my parliamentary colleagues have acknowledged, today is National Close the Gap Day. It is well known that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders experience poorer health outcomes than their non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander counterparts. This is not acceptable. Things are beginning to improve.

The average life expectancy for Indigenous men and women is on the rise, increasing over five years by almost two years to 68.7 years and 74.4 years respectively, according to the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics data. More pregnant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are also attending antenatal appointments earlier and more regularly throughout their pregnancy. This is having a positive effect on health outcomes for both mothers and children. It has also contributed to infant mortality among the Indigenous population dropping from 10.9 deaths per thousand in 2004 to 6.1 deaths per thousand in 2014.

This is all good news, but there is so much more than we can do. Closing the gap is a priority for the Palaszczuk Labor government. This is why we are working to strengthen Indigenous health services and programs throughout the state. The work being carried out at a local level plays a fundamental role in our efforts towards improving the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. We must ensure that at a state level we are prioritising key contributors to the health gap.

The Palaszczuk Labor government has developed an Indigenous health investment strategy that will allocate more than \$200 million over three years to continue efforts towards closing the health gap in Queensland by 2033. The Making Tracks strategy aims to direct funding to services that focus on prevention, improved diagnosis, early intervention and better treatment. We are focused on tackling conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and mental health.

Just recently I also launched the *Deadly kids, deadly futures: Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child ear and hearing health framework 2016-2026*. This framework is the first of its kind in Australia and aims to prevent and manage the high rate of middle ear disease in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The work being done by the hardworking front-line staff across the state is having a real effect on outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. By working together, we can continue to improve the system and work towards closing the gap.