




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Influenza

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (2.27 pm): Every year during winter Queensland's hospital and health services confront a challenge as influenza starts to take its toll on our state. Already, this year we have seen over 2,600 cases of influenza. The effect of the flu can be long waits in the emergency department, ambulances unable to off-load their patients and get back to the next job and cancellations of elective surgery.

The challenge for our health system is twofold. At the same time as more members of the public get sick, so do more members of our staff. That means that our time of highest demand is matched by the time of our largest staff absence due to illness. This year, the Department of Health is working with the Queensland Ambulance Service and all hospital and health services to produce a winter bed strategy. This strategy is being developed by leaders across our state's public health system and is designed to support the system during this time of increased demand. I will have more to say about that strategy in due course.

I can assure this House that, although the government will do its part, it can do only so much. Queenslanders can play a role to support the health system through this period. There are three things that Queenslanders can do. Firstly, we need Queenslanders to roll up their sleeve and grab a jab. Getting a flu shot is one of the most important preventive health steps that we can all take into the lead-up to winter. I am pleased to say that the Premier and I have set an example today. We rolled up our sleeves and we grabbed a jab.

Secondly, I call on all Queenslanders to go and see their GP if they feel sick and also to proactively manage their health. Queenslanders can also call 13HEALTH for up-to-date advice and support. Thirdly, I ask Queenslanders to remember that emergency departments are for emergencies. This year, a quadrivalent vaccine has been issued as part of the national immunisation program. It protects against two type A and two type B strains of the influenza virus in response to the spike of type B cases that we saw last year. Stocks of the vaccine are now available throughout Queensland. I encourage all members of this House and all Queenslanders to grab a jab and avoid the flu this winter.