



Speech By  
**Hon. Cameron Dick**


**MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE**

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Record of Proceedings, 11 May 2016

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Influenza**

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (2.18 pm): Even more predictable than a change in the LNP leadership is the arrival each year of the flu season, especially here in South-East Queensland. The number of people contracting influenza starts to rise in South-East Queensland in June and peaks in August. August 2015 was particularly bad, with the highest volume of emergency department presentations ever seen in Queensland. While we hope that this year will not be as extreme, the government is taking active steps to prepare for this rise in activity. Winter is coming, and Queensland must be prepared.

Today I travelled to QEII Hospital in the wonderful electorate of Sunnybank to launch the Palaszczuk government's five-point plan for this year's flu season. This plan will drive efficiencies, keep emergency departments moving and get ambulances back on the road. Our five-point plan will, firstly, provide an additional \$15 million to health and hospital services; secondly, provide access to an extra 139 beds across the state to provide surge capacity in areas of high demand; thirdly, deploy 12 new clinical initiative nurses in metropolitan hospitals to supervise patients arriving by ambulance and get QAS resources back on the road more quickly; fourthly, in partnership with the CSIRO, use large data sets to make staffing hospitals and emergency departments during winter more efficient; and, fifthly, bring forward the recruitment of additional paramedics in response to rising demands for services.

The development of this strategy follows from work done in early April by representatives from hospitals, the Department of Health and the QAS at a roundtable discussion. This five-point plan will help us address ambulance response times during the busiest part of the year. I have been working closely with the Queensland Ambulance Service to address increasing demand and the consequences of the previous government's decision to rescind the directive that implemented the Metropolitan Emergency Department Access Initiative.

A combination of these factors have driven increases in response times at both the 50th and 90th percentile. I am advised by the commissioner that he expects to deliver response times at around 8.6 minutes for the 50th percentile and around 17 minutes for the 90th percentile for this financial year. This plan will support the Queensland Ambulance Service by getting more vehicles out of emergency departments and back on the road. The government has developed its plan, but there is only so much that government can do. There are three simple steps Queenslanders themselves can take to help deliver high-quality health care. Firstly, Queenslanders can proactively manage their health by regularly seeing their GP. Secondly, Queenslanders can get a flu shot and they should get it now. Thirdly, emergency departments are for emergency cases only, and I remind Queenslanders to remember that and please make use of the free Queensland 13HEALTH number if you have concerns about yourself or one of the members of your family.