




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Criminal Code, Age of Consent; Draft Sexual Health Strategy

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (2.26 pm): One of the fundamental tenets of our society is equality before the law. Queenslanders should not face adverse health outcomes because of laws based on prejudice. In Queensland, there has been a disparity between the ages of consent for sexual activity for many years. On 16 May this year I convened an expert panel to consider standardising these ages. The panel found that the inconsistent approach to the age of consent is a barrier to young people accessing sexual health services and health information.

As health minister, I find it unacceptable that some Queenslanders are banned from discussing safe, consensual sexual activity with health professionals—it is archaic and it is dangerous. By the end of 2016, the Palaszczuk Labor government will legislate to amend the Criminal Code, standardising the age of consent for all lawful sexual activity in Queensland. Making this change addresses a longstanding case of legislative discrimination against gay men.

Good sexual health and good reproductive health are fundamental to our overall health and wellbeing. Today I am also pleased to be delivering on another Palaszczuk government election commitment by releasing for public consultation a draft sexual health strategy for Queensland. I am pleased to advise the House that Queensland, under the leadership of the Premier, is again leading the way nationally. This is the first time any state or territory has developed a comprehensive sexual and reproductive health strategy.

This strategy aims to combat the rising rates of sexually transmitted diseases and promote the importance of positive relationships by prioritising prevention; improving community awareness and information; supporting healthy ageing by providing quality, non-discriminatory health care; improving education and support for young people; and responding directly to the sexual health needs of specific populations. The strategy will be supported by real funding delivered through action plans to address specific issues.

I am pleased to announce today that this includes the North Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sexually Transmissible Infections Action Plan 2016 to 2021. The action plan will address deeply concerning rates of syphilis infection among North Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The amount of \$15.7 million has been provided over the next three years for this plan. Funding will support eight jobs and deliver a program of screening in Cairns and regional and remote locations such as Doomadgee and Kowanyama.

This government is implementing a comprehensive, well-considered package of measures designed to improve the sexual health of Queenslanders. It is all part of Advancing Health 2026, our 10-year vision to build a healthier Queensland. I encourage all members of this House to talk to their communities about these strategies and encourage them to participate in the consultation.