




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Healthy Hearing Program

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (10.16 am): Every year, as many as 100 Queensland babies may be born with serious hearing problems. If hearing problems are detected early and treatment begins before babies are six months old, they have a strong chance of heading off future communication, health and learning problems. In 2004, the Beattie Labor government launched the Healthy Hearing Program to screen all newborns at birth for hearing loss across Queensland. Since 2004, Queensland Health staff have performed more than 660,000 hearing tests, identifying more than 1,350 children with a hearing loss. The program ensures that families of children born with a bilateral moderate or greater degree of hearing loss—approximately one child in every 1,000—get access to the support and treatment they need sooner. This program is now getting a significant boost.

I am pleased to report to the House that Queensland's Healthy Hearing Program will be the first in Australia to use the handheld AccuScreen device to screen for hearing loss. This new technology can screen a baby for hearing loss in as little as 12 seconds. Given that previous screening equipment took as long as seven minutes to get a result, this will dramatically improve the efficiency of the program and allow better use of resources, and the testing of babies can occur when they are asleep.

I am pleased to announce that the Palaszczuk government will roll out the device to all 64 birthing hospitals, both public and private, across the state by January 2018. The new AccuScreen device went live at the Mater Mothers' Hospital in Brisbane earlier this month with great success. It is now also available in Caboolture, Redcliffe and Mater Hospital Redlands. It will then be progressively rolled out across the state from September starting with Hervey Bay and Bundaberg and then Beaudesert, Redlands and the Gold Coast in October.

Using new technology to more efficiently screen newborn babies for hearing loss is exactly the sort of front-line service delivery our government is focused on. This measure will allow us to better use front-line staff, while also being less disruptive for newborn babies and their parents.