




Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles
MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Flu Vaccinations

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (9.45 am): Now is the time for Queenslanders to roll up their sleeves and get their annual flu vaccinations. That is exactly what I am going to do today here at parliament. Already this year more than 3,900 cases of influenza have been confirmed across the state. That is 360 more than this time last year. Last year, as we know, was bad—56,000 Queenslanders caught the flu in the worst flu season on record. We can all play our part to reduce the risk of getting the flu and passing it on to our families and colleagues by getting our flu shots. I am a bit embarrassed to admit this but last year I was one of those Queenslanders who did not get their flu shot.

Opposition members interjected.

Dr MILES: It is true. I was not the health minister at the time, I would emphasise.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, members! The minister has made a confession. Let us leave it at that.

Dr MILES: Mr Speaker, it gets worse. I was one of those Queenslanders who got so sick that an ambulance had to take me to hospital. I am embarrassed to admit this because it all could have been avoided. Flu viruses change and mutate frequently, which is why it is so important for Queenslanders to get vaccinated every year. Now is the perfect time to get vaccinated. The weather is getting colder and people are starting to sniffle. Getting your vaccine before the end of May will protect you through the worst of the season.

Eligible Queenslanders can now access the government funded vaccine from their local providers. This includes the new Palaszczuk government initiative to provide free vaccinations for all children aged six months to less than five years. As every parent knows, young children are super spreaders, and they are more likely to experience serious complications from influenza because their immune systems are still developing and they lack previous exposure. Last year about 550 children under five were admitted to public hospitals with influenza.

Another group of people who should be getting their flu shots is pregnant women. I was appalled to read recently that anti-vaxxers were telling pregnant women not to get the flu shot. One of the worst things that can happen if you are pregnant is getting the flu. The government funded vaccine is available to anyone over 65 and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, but for everyone else it is really not that expensive. Please go to your GP or your pharmacy and get one. It is a small cost to ensure the best protection for this year's flu season.