




Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

Record of Proceedings, 14 November 2018

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Health Services, Legionella

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (9.48 am): More than 1,000 new nurses and midwives begin their careers in Queensland public hospitals every single year. The Palaszczuk government is training the health workforce of the future and making sure that our doctors, nurses and other health professionals have the right skills and training pathways. To address the challenges associated with a decentralised state we have developed a number of strategies to guide our efforts in building a sustainable health workforce. These initiatives include: a 10-year statewide health workforce strategy and targeted workforce plans for the rural and remote health workforce; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment participation; the medical practitioner workforce; and the mental health workforce.

The government hosted a medical specialist workforce summit in late 2017 with key stakeholders to prioritise initiatives aimed at addressing issues associated with access to medical specialist services. The first ministerial specialist summit was well received by industry, and we will hold a second summit to evaluate the progress of the initiatives developed and consider additional workforce issues that may affect access to specialist services.

One of the best examples of this government's commitment to the health of Queenslanders is the approach we have taken to manage issues such as legionella. While legionella bacteria can be found in soils and water systems just about anywhere, it is most serious in hospitals, aged-care and healthcare settings where there is a concentration of older people and people suffering suppressed immune systems. That is why it is very important that legionella bacteria are identified in these places quickly and management plans put in place to treat the source and protect patients.

In 2017 the Palaszczuk government introduced new testing and reporting requirements. Queensland now has some of the most stringent water risk management requirements for public and private health facilities in Australia, including mandatory scheduled testing for and reporting of legionella. All Queensland Health hospitals, as well as private health facilities, now have water risk management plans that identify the hazards associated with their water systems, assess the risks and show how these risks must be managed to ensure the safety of patients and staff within each facility. All facilities are required to report legionella water sample results to the Chief Health Officer, including what action they have taken and will take to manage it. Those measures have been incredibly effective.

Since those new laws there have been no hospital associated cases of either legionnaire's disease or Pontiac fever in Queensland. In 2017 and to date in 2018 there were 112 cases of legionella related diseases reported in Queensland. Fifty-eight were water associated while 52 were from soil or potting mix. I repeat: none were hospital associated. Since the commencement of the Palaszczuk government's tough new laws there have been 39 written advisory/warning letters sent to 17 facilities out of a total of approximately 270 regulated facilities. All related to minor infringements of reporting time frames and required no further action.