




Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles
MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Flu Season

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (9.51 am): Winter is coming. It is time—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Thank you, member for Kawana. There have been previous *Game of Thrones* references in this chamber.

Dr MILES: Winter is coming. It is time for people in all of our electorates and kingdoms to put aside our differences and fight the battle of winter flu. Already people throughout our lands are feeling the impact of the flu invasion. We have seen an unprecedented and unseasonal spike in flu cases, over three times the five-year average. The peak of flu season is still a few months away, but so far this year Queensland has recorded more than 9,000 cases. During the same period last year, there were around 4,000 cases and 3,500 cases the year before. This year there have been 9,345 lab confirmed influenza cases, 775 hospitalisations and 68 intensive care admissions. Our Night's Watch—the hardworking paramedics and emergency department staff—is hard at work preparing to keep us safe, but the increase highlights the need for all Queenslanders to play their part to prevent the flu. Flu viruses change frequently, which is why it is important for Queenslanders to get their flu shot every year.

Ms Grace: I got mine last Friday.

Dr MILES: Free flu shots are available to many in the community and I especially encourage those eligible to take the education minister's lead and take up the opportunity and get vaccinated. Because we know kids are super spreaders, the Palaszczuk government has funded free flu vaccines for all children aged six months to less than five years. I encourage all mums and dads to get their little ones vaccinated. Other at-risk groups eligible for the government funded flu shot include pregnant women during any stage of pregnancy, persons 65 years of age or older, all Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people six months of age or older, and persons six months of age or older who have certain medical conditions. All other Queenslanders can purchase the flu shot from their doctor, pharmacist or immunisation provider.

Flu season in Queensland is typically from June to September, with the peak usually in August. While it is never too late to get vaccinated, the latest expert advice is the best protection is provided if you get the shot three to four months before the flu season peaks—or before episode 5 of *Game of Thrones*. That is now. While it seems like the Red Wedding was only yesterday, winter is nearly here. None of us can afford to be complacent. Everyone also needs to be aware that the vaccine is not immediately effective. It generally takes 10 to 14 days to be fully protected after you get your shot.

Everyone needs to be vigilant when it comes to the flu, as the complications can be deadly. We need to encourage everyone to wash their hands properly, cover coughs with a tissue and to stay at home when sick. Vaccines are one of the greatest inventions in human history. They are the Valyrian steel of the battle against the flu. They take only a minute to receive, are incredibly effective and can save your life and the lives of your family. I urge all Queenslanders to come together and join our flu army this season.