




Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Flu Season

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (9.56 am): It is nothing short of tragic that 25 Queenslanders have died from the flu this year. It is a stark reminder that the flu is a serious disease and we must do what we can to protect ourselves and our communities. We have seen more than half the number of deaths already compared to the total number of deaths last year, and it is only May. It is no secret that so far this year we have seen an unprecedented and unseasonable spike in flu cases, over three times the five-year average. Last sitting I told the House that we had seen just over 9,000 confirmed cases of the flu in Queensland. Now, just weeks later, it is almost 10,000. Of those, 823 people ended up in a public hospital and 73 were admitted to an intensive care unit.

As we head into the peak of the season in the winter months, we must urge people to get their flu vaccinations. It is not too late to get protected. Flu viruses change frequently, which is why it is so important for Queenslanders to get their flu shot every year, and free flu shots are available to many in the community. I encourage those eligible to get vaccinated by their GP. People are eligible during any stage of pregnancy, if they are over 65 years old, if they are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or if they have certain medical conditions like asthma. Just ask your doctor. The Palaszczuk government has also funded free flu vaccines for all children under five years old and we have seen an incredible uptake of this program. I encourage all mums and dads to get their little ones vaccinated. All other Queenslanders can purchase their flu shot from their doctor or pharmacist.

The Premier and I had ours on the green last sitting and I promise it does not hurt. That means that we are now protected against the flu, as the shot takes 10 to 14 days to fully take effect. We know that the complications from flu can be deadly. My heart goes out to the families of the 25 people who have lost their lives this year to this dreadful disease. We need to encourage everyone to wash their hands properly, cover coughs with a tissue and to stay at home when sick—and please get your flu shot. Remind your family members, remind your work colleagues, tell your friends. It only takes a minute, it is incredibly effective and can save your life and the lives of your family.