




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Turner, Mr N

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (2.35 pm): I rise to pay tribute to my constituent Nathan Turner, who passed away on Wednesday, 27 May in Blackwater. Nathan was a much loved member of the Blackwater community and, at age 30, was tragically young when he passed away. I put on record my condolences to his family and to his fiancée, Simone, and to her family.

I also raise serious questions about what exactly happened, because it has put at risk the credibility of the COVID-19 testing process and the Queensland Health protocols that should be governing that process. This has occurred at a time when I am encouraging my constituents to trust both the testing and the confidentiality. I am encouraging them to do this because a trusted testing system for COVID-19 is the only way Queenslanders can continue to function while the world waits for a vaccine—and that wait may be a long one.

A week after Labor's CCC referral of a nurse, a young man living in an isolated town hundreds of kilometres from any COVID-19 hotspot died. The young man had a medical condition. Nathan had been unable to work since November last year. Furthermore, he had not left Blackwater since February, before the pandemic restrictions were put in place. Tragically, he was found in their home by his fiancée when she returned from work at 4.30 pm. Ambulance and police attended and a swab for COVID-19 was taken at the scene. Some hours later Simone was even more shocked to be told that it had returned a positive result. Understandably, she was still struggling to come to terms with what had happened to her since 4.30 pm. She needed all the support she could get. Instead, she was told that the situation was so urgent that the media must be briefed. This is where the story goes crazy.

As Simone was struggling with the shock of finding Nathan dead in their home, as she was still overwhelmed by grief, she was being pushed to agree to the state government taking the story public. Where was the testing protocol which required two more swabs to be processed in order to confirm the results before making any announcement? What happened to the privacy rules governing Queensland Health's release of patient information? It is one thing to act with judicious speed; it is quite another to go public before all the facts are ascertained.

There were so many reasons for caution: Nathan had a pre-existing medical condition, the fact that Nathan could not have caught it at work, the fact that Nathan could not have caught it outside Blackwater, the fact that Blackwater had no history of other COVID-19 cases. Somehow media was given the names of both Nathan and Simone.

Queensland Health told the media that Simone had been sent into isolation at Rockhampton Hospital. She was not. A second swab was taken and came back negative, but apparently the sample was bad. The media was told that he had symptoms for four weeks but, according to Nathan's fiancée, he had a sniffle for four days. The aged-care nurse was tenuously linked to the Blackwater case and was persecuted in the media.

It was suggested that the family might not want a post-mortem, but they did. It took three days to get Nathan's body to Brisbane, even though we knew the delay would make it harder to detect any virus. When the results come back, they were negative for COVID-19—the first being a false positive. Simone tested negative for COVID-19 all along, as did Simone's family and friends and hundreds of Blackwater residents. They were all negative—and so a stressful and disgraceful episode comes to an end.

For well over a week the people of Blackwater went through hell and back. The media descended on the tiny town of Blackwater and frightened people. There was concern and confusion. Questions need to be answered. Why was another test not taken before they went public with COVID-19? We have to think of the family here. Another 24 hours or even another 12 hours just to get the correct result could have avoided panic in the community and stress on his fiancée, Nathan's family, friends and loved ones and a concerned community.

You have probably all seen the pictures of the media that descended on Blackwater and the nationwide coverage. That community did not deserve to go through that. There could have been another test 12 hours later just to get it right and some privacy for the family, who were not only dealing with a possible COVID-19 case but the death of a loved one. They were treated horribly in this whole process. They need answers and we need to make sure that we learn from these mistakes.