




Speech By  
**Hon. Dr Steven Miles**  
**MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA**

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Record of Proceedings, 17 March 2020

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Coronavirus, Health Response

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (9.49 am): The Palaszczuk government is supporting our health system in the face of the novel coronavirus pandemic, now known as COVID-19. In Queensland we now have 78 confirmed cases of COVID-19. One Queenslanders has lost their life. Nationally more than 375 cases have been confirmed, and five deaths. Globally there are 181,377 cases, with 7,119 lives lost across 155 countries and regions.

From the beginning of this pandemic we have listened to the experts and we have been preparing for it. In many cases we have been the first to act. Queensland was the first state to declare a public health emergency on 29 January 2020. Queensland was the first state to bring forward elective surgery. Thanks to that investment, thousands of Queenslanders have received health care that could have had to have been deferred during an outbreak. We were the first to enact new laws giving our Chief Health Officer greater powers to enforce home isolation. In a lot of ways, we have been ahead of the country and ahead of the virus and we intend to continue to be.

We will triple emergency department capacity. We will double intensive care unit capacity. We purchased an extra 110 ventilators and brought forward \$25 million worth of medicines, gloves and masks. We have set up fever clinics in every hospital and health service in the state, ready to be deployed at a moment's notice. At least 19 were open yesterday. We are trialling drive-through fever clinics at Caloundra and Toowoomba.

We have expanded our testing sites across the state and are performing more than 1,200 tests a day, and we have partnered with private pathology providers to test as many Queenslanders as possible. We have performed more than 10,000 tests in total in public laboratories and a similar number in the private sector. We have more testing capacity per capita than most places in the world and will continue to do so.

All of this preparation has successfully contained the spread of the virus in Queensland so far. Our goal has been to find every suspected case, isolate and test them, and if they are positive provide them with the best possible care. That approach will continue if and when we have sustained community transmission. Current modelling suggests that could be next month. Just as our efforts have delayed the start of the epidemic here, by maintaining them we can slow the spread; effectively, flatten the curve of infection. That will allow our hospitals to save more lives.

Understandably, many Queenslanders are fearful. I urge all members to help communicate accurate information. Assure the public our health system is world class and well prepared. Encourage people to only seek testing if they meet the current case criteria, that is, only seek testing if you have been overseas within 14 days or have had contact with a confirmed case—and this is important—and you have symptoms: a cough, sore throat, fever, headache or sneezing.

Because of the nature of the test, we cannot test people who are not unwell. If Queensland Health staff tell you that you cannot be tested, it is because you cannot. Please do not get angry or frustrated with them. They are working hard to keep Queenslanders safe and healthy. They do not deserve to be yelled at or abused. If you are required to self-isolate or quarantine, we will support you.

There is no need to stockpile. Think of other people who cannot afford to buy up. They could be your neighbour or your grandma. The Red Cross has already made 8,861 welfare calls to the 3,406 people already asked to self-quarantine. What the world is experiencing right now is unprecedented and so are our preparations. Facing unprecedented situations is what Queensland and Queenslanders do well. COVID-19 is no different.