



Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles
MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Health Update

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (9.55 am): Six months ago, ‘coronavirus’ was a word only used by medical professionals. Talk of a new or novel coronavirus in China was about to spread through the scientific and medical community. Now it is dominating the news of the world. It is what the world will remember of 2020.

It has been 139 days since COVID-19 reached Queensland—139 days that Queenslanders have made sacrifices, changing their lives in ways they never thought they would have to. They have worked from home, they have created classrooms in their living rooms, and they have postponed important events, all to stop the spread of COVID-19 in Queensland. It is thanks to every single Queenslanders’ dedication and hard work that we can now wind back restrictions faster than we ever thought we could.

Right now Queensland is in a good position. We have seen consecutive days of zero new cases and we are well into the process of winding back restrictions and on track to commence stage 3 of our recovery road map. To date, the number of confirmed cases in Queensland is 1,065. Since the first case was identified in late January, we have done more than 250,000 tests. We are now testing up to 6,000 Queenslanders per day, but we could do much more.

We are encouraging anyone experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, no matter how mild, to get tested. If we can be certain that COVID-19 is not spreading in the community, we can continue to ease restrictions and continue our Unite and Recover plan for Queensland. That is Queensland’s plan for getting through this global crisis.

We have made sure our healthcare system has had the time and resources it needs to manage the virus if there is a future outbreak. We are very well prepared and can ramp up hospital capacity anywhere in the state if required. Queensland’s initial modelling estimated that more than 30,000 Queenslanders could lose their lives to COVID-19 and one in four of us would fall ill with this virus. Instead, we have been able to contain any potential outbreaks because of the rapid response from our health services. We have been able to stop any significant community transmission.

But we are amongst the few exceptions. The impact COVID-19 has had in many countries across the world is devastating. More than 430,000 people have died from COVID-19 and almost eight million people have fallen ill to the virus. In the US alone, more than two million people have fallen ill with COVID-19. That is just under the population of Brisbane City. More than 115,000 people in the US have died of this disease. That is the population of Mackay. The rest of the world has not had the same opportunity to recover. They are still experiencing widespread outbreaks of this awful disease.

Last week, China reported a new cluster of cases in Beijing after more than 50 days without a case in that city. Since then, more than 100 cases have been confirmed. That is why we must be so careful and strategic in our approach to easing restrictions. We have to make sure we do not see a second wave like so many other places have.

We are moving forward—taking small but safe steps to get Queensland back to normal. The good news is that Queenslanders can now travel almost anywhere across the state, and we are encouraging Queenslanders to explore their state and support local businesses. We have worked with the federal government to ease restrictions in remote communities under the Biosecurity Act and established safe travel zones.

The global economy has been hit hard by COVID-19. It will take years before the rest of the world recovers, but they will not even be able to turn their mind to that until they have controlled the virus like we have. Here in Queensland the Palaszczuk government has already started delivering Queensland's COVID-19 recovery plan. Our strong health response has allowed us to open the Queensland economy more quickly and get more people back to work. However, there is a long road ahead to recovery to get back to where we were—to create jobs for Queenslanders.

We have greatly expanded the number of businesses that can now open and increased the number of patrons allowed at any one time. People can now dine in at their favourite cafe or restaurant or visit their local beauty salon. People can now workout at the gym and participate in non-contact outdoor and indoor community sport. We are working closely with organisations to implement COVID-safe industry plans so they can safely open their doors and get their staff back to work. We are looking forward to further reconnecting our communities and supporting our economy—getting more people working—as it is safe to do so.

Now is the time to support local tourism more than ever—take that campervan road trip, sit on the beach in the Whitsundays, explore the rainforest in Cairns. This month is Queensland for Queenslanders. If we stick to the plan we can keep Queenslanders safe from this disease, get businesses back up and running and employ people for good.