




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

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Record of Proceedings, 12 August 2020

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Coronavirus, Health Update

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (9.45 am): Today is another zero day for Queensland, with 11 days of no community transmission. Here in Queensland we have been fortunate to have many days like today thanks to the hard work of Queenslanders and to our preparedness. Queensland has acted quickly and decisively throughout this pandemic and it is that action which has allowed us to focus on economic recovery, on getting people back to work.

We were the first Australian state to declare the pandemic a public health emergency. We legislated to give our Chief Health Officer, Dr Jeannette Young, the powers she needed to fight this pandemic. We injected \$1.2 billion into our public hospitals to double intensive care and triple emergency department capacity. We ordered more PPE and ventilators. We hired more frontline health staff and we were one of the first jurisdictions in the world to start testing for COVID-19.

Right from the beginning we knew that testing capacity would be critical, so we have continued to expand our testing capabilities. We bought 35 more GeneXpert machines to rapidly test for COVID and more Panther machines so we could test right around the state. We also introduced serology testing to assist with contact tracing. Our great Queensland based private pathology services QML and Sullivan Nicolaides have bolstered our public testing capacity. Together, as of this morning, 693,707 tests have been done in Queensland, with 9,883 in the last 24 hours. Until we have an approved vaccine for COVID-19, we will continue to rely on methods like testing to keep Queenslanders safe, and that is why I am pleased to inform the House that we are once again increasing our testing capability.

Today I am announcing a trial of testing for COVID-19 in pharmacies. Over the next few months community pharmacies across the state will be able to take part in the pilot project. Queenslanders have so far done extremely well. We saw recently in the southern suburbs of Brisbane and in Logan and in Ipswich people coming out in droves to get tested when we asked. This trial is about making testing even more accessible. Each year there are over 458 million patient visits to pharmacies, or about 8.8 million a week. Community pharmacies are accessible, trusted places in communities across Queensland, including some of our regional and remote areas.

Making testing available at your local pharmacy will make it even easier for Queenslanders to get tested. The pharmacy is often the first place we go when we have those respiratory symptoms—an itchy throat, a snuffle, a fever. They provide us with lozenges, cold and flu tablets, paracetamol. Now they will be able to test us for COVID-19. Under this pilot program, pharmacists will be provided with extra training to conduct the testing and samples will still be analysed by Queensland Health. The same rules will apply. People who are tested will be required to self-quarantine until they get a negative test result. A strong health response is our first step to economic recovery. I want to ask all Queenslanders to get tested if they have any symptoms whatsoever. If we continue our strong health response together, we will be able to continue to deliver Queensland's plan to unite and recover.