




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

Record of Proceedings, 16 November 2021

ADJOURNMENT

Keppel Electorate, Coronavirus

 **Ms LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (7.05 pm): I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of my friends Jodie and Adam. Thank you for being here at parliament; it is great to have you. Keppel has been through floods, fires, cyclones, droughts and hailstorms and is now enduring a global pandemic. COVID-19 has had a significant impact on our region over the past two years. Last year businesses had to close their doors, working parents had to juggle Zoom and homeschool, school students missed formals, workers stepped up and our hospitals rapidly prepared for the possible rush of patients needing treatment and care. As Keppel always does, we rolled up our sleeves, got to work and protected the elderly and the vulnerable. Neighbourhoods were alight with generosity.

As a result of our hard work, community spirit and care and as a result of heeding the advice of the then chief health officer, Dr Jeannette Young, the Premier and the medical experts, Central Queensland has pretty much avoided COVID—until now. As one of the most disaster affected regions in Australia, Keppel knows how to get back up again after we have been knocked down. When the fire roars, we help each other get out. When the cyclone is coming, we batten down the hatches. When the floodwaters rise, we pack sandbags. Well, COVID is coming. I am asking Keppel residents—I am pleading—to please get vaccinated.

Today Queenslanders started coming back home from New South Wales and Victoria. There were emotional scenes at the airports today as families were reunited after months apart. I acknowledge all of those families who have sacrificed so much in order to keep Queenslanders safe. As people return home, they will inevitably bring COVID with them. That is a reality. This pandemic is not some made-up thing. It is not some game that health professionals are playing to control you or to improve 5G connections. When COVID comes, I need our region to be absolutely ready for it. Let us employ the same generosity that I have witnessed time and time again in the face of disaster. You can be a generous, selfless, caring local by getting vaccinated—for you, your family, your friends, the elderly and the vulnerable. We do not need One Nation and the LNP stirring mistruths. Just do not buy into it. If you are unsure, if you want to ask questions, if you want to know what is going on and why, just ask me. I have always been available to anyone who wanted to meet with me about anything.

I am pleased to inform the House that vaccination rates in Central Queensland increased by 4.1 per cent last week. Livingstone is now at 77.2 per cent first dose and Rocky is at 78.2 per cent first dose. These numbers are expected to climb over the next few weeks and months. Second-dose numbers will also increase. That means that as every day goes by more and more people will be able to continue to go about their business as per normal. Please, Keppel, now is the time to respond to this disaster. Let's be kind to each other, caring for our community, and get vaccinated.