



Speech By
Hon. Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Vaccination

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (10.06 am): The ministerial portfolio of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships is responsible for three of the most vulnerable population groups in our society, and this is heightened in the current climate of a global pandemic.

Delta is on our doorstep, and there are none more vulnerable than elders in our community, people with disability or chronic illness and co-morbidities, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We know that these three cohorts are at greater risk of getting very sick if they catch COVID-19. That is why the Palaszczuk government is actively engaging to ensure they are protected.

I am happy to report that our Queensland seniors are leading the way when it comes to protecting themselves and their communities. Older Queenslanders have resoundingly answered the call for vaccination. At least 94 per cent of Queenslanders aged 70 years and over have had their first COVID vaccination and 81 per cent are fully vaccinated. Older Queenslanders understand the importance of getting vaccinated to stay safe and connected to their family and community, and to be able to get back to doing the things they enjoy.

Also rising to the challenge are Queenslanders living with disability. Around 82 per cent of people with disability who utilise accommodation support and respite services have now had at least one dose of vaccination. We will continue to work with disability clients, service providers and families to support them to be fully vaccinated. We have also increased access and mobility at a number of vaccination clinics for people with disability, their families, carers and the disability workforce, with locations advertised online.

The Palaszczuk government has also been persistent in urging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders to get their COVID-19 vaccine. While vaccination uptake has been strong among First Nations people in Brisbane and the south-east, the government is concerned about the lower uptake in regional and remote areas. We know some of our isolated Indigenous communities are among the nation's most vulnerable to an outbreak of the delta strain.

We are deeply concerned about the potential impact if the virus were to take hold among the chronically ill and elderly in these towns and communities. Even more worrying is the fact that the First Nations cohort aged 20 to 29 currently have the lowest vaccination rate of any in the state. Statewide figures show that 47.9 per cent of First Nations people have had their first dose, with 36.2 per cent having had their second dose.

Thankfully, to date there have been zero cases of community transmission in any of the discrete communities, but now is the time for everyone to make the choice and get vaccinated. In some communities, teams of health workers have been going door to door to encourage residents to get the

jab, and ministerial and government champions have been out visiting their communities to support the rollout effort. I thank those ministers who changed their diaries at the last minute last week to undertake that important work.

The Make the Choice COVID-19 vaccine campaign is being rolled out, and the Chief Health Officer and I have been in regular contact with the mayors of remote communities for those discussions. It has been great to see many of them lead the way in getting the jab and promoting the vaccine rollout in their communities. I very much acknowledge the mayors and elders in communities for their leadership. The time is now to get vaccinated before the wet season and before Queensland begins to open up to interstate and international travellers. I implore all members of this House to reach out to the First Nations leaders in their electorates to discuss how, as members of parliament, they can assist with the much needed positive messaging into their electorates around vaccination. The more Queenslanders who are vaccinated, the safer our families and communities will be.