




Speech By
Cynthia Lui

MEMBER FOR COOK

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MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Coronavirus, Vaccine

 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (2.31 pm): I rise today to speak about the COVID-19 vaccination rollout in the Torres Strait. Before I start, I would like to acknowledge the Palaszczuk government for implementing tough measures in Queensland to protect Queenslanders and especially vulnerable communities in my electorate of Cook. These measures have worked. In my electorate we have had zero COVID cases. In the most vulnerable communities of Torres Strait and Cape York, there have been zero cases of COVID-19, which is a great achievement due to this government's response to COVID-19.

This government made sure we worked closely with local leaders, and that is something I am really proud of. That collaborative effort across all levels of government has ensured the safety of all of our communities. There is a large number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Cook electorate with chronic diseases, such as diabetes, blood pressure problems and renal failure. The list of underlying chronic diseases is extensive and it needs to be brought into this conversation when we talk about the types of measures we take to safeguard communities.

We are not out of the woods yet. I had the privilege of visiting my home in the Torres Strait last week to hear about the vaccination rollout across three communities that we have identified as being the most vulnerable. I want to particularly mention Saibai Island. Saibai is only four kilometres from Papua New Guinea and that puts people living in the community of Saibai at a very high risk of getting COVID-19. Right now, we cannot take anything for granted. There are a large number of cases in Papua New Guinea, and the Premier stated this morning there are currently 3,574 cases, including 120 of its hospital staff. With the Torres Strait Treaty, there is movement of people back and forth. Even though there is no current movement of people, we need to make sure that every measure that is put in place acknowledges all the factors that put people at risk.

This vaccination rollout will safeguard communities like Saibai. It will safeguard people with chronic diseases. It will provide immunity so that people can fight COVID-19. This is a potential outbreak in Papua New Guinea, and it could be a potential outbreak here in Queensland. The Palaszczuk government has done an amazing job in keeping COVID out of our communities, and the vaccination rollout in the Torres Strait is just another example of the good work that this government is doing.

I support the Palaszczuk government with this vaccination rollout. I would like to encourage families back home and say that this is going to keep us safe. We need to trust our medical experts with the advice they are giving us. We need to trust that this vaccine will get us out of the woods. We need to trust that this government is doing all that it can to protect communities right across Queensland, in the Cook electorate, in Cape York and in my home of Torres Strait.