




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 28 October 2021

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT

Burdekin Electorate, Vaccination

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (3.01 pm): Yesterday afternoon and again this morning we heard members on that side of the House pointing the finger of blame at everyone except themselves when it comes to vaccination rates in some areas of rural and regional Queensland. Make no mistake, this government has failed when it comes to those areas. There is no other way to put it. The reason is simple: this government either does not understand or does not care about the regions. That is nothing new. We have seen it with our roads. We have seen this government stand idly by while towns in my electorate have been left without doctors. When it comes to one of the biggest challenges the world has seen in the last 100 years, again we see failure.

The Burdekin electorate paid a huge price for this government's failures when it came to the Pacific island workers. Despite the thousands of tonnes of produce that went to waste this year, not to mention the huge economic impact on the Burdekin, it took 18 months to set up a dedicated quarantine facility. Bowen continues to wait.

We can talk about pop-up vaccination clinics at Bunnings, at schools and surf clubs all we like, but the facts are that there are no Bunnings in the Burdekin electorate, no surf clubs in the Burdekin electorate were chosen to host vaccinations and not one school in the Burdekin electorate was chosen to be a vaccination centre. Yesterday when I mentioned the low vaccination rate in rural and regional Queensland the member for Thuringowa asked what I was doing about it. I am pleased to say that in the last 18 months my staff and I have answered hundreds if not thousands of phone calls, emails and messages about vaccination locations because constituents are unable to find a vaccination location. If the member for Thuringowa had any decency he would apologise to my staff for those comments.

Mr HARPER: Madam Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take personal offence and I ask him to withdraw.

Mr LAST: I withdraw. I have called on this government to use the same SMS system that is used for natural disasters to advise when pop-up clinics are being operated. That would give people incentive and time to prepare for what may well be a four-hour round trip to receive their vaccine. The bush is different to the cities. Regional areas, including Indigenous communities, need a different plan to the city. Instead of criticising and trying to blame people in regional areas, this government needs to treat those same people with the respect that they deserve. Otherwise the blame for any outbreak lays at the feet of this government.

Mr Harper interjected.

Mr LAST: The member for Thuringowa talks the big game down here in Brisbane, but where is he when he is back in his own community of Thuringowa? Not a peep!

Mr HARPER: Madam Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take personal offence and I ask him to withdraw.

Mr LAST: I withdraw. We are about to move into a phase of booster shots and yet we have areas in my electorate, in particular the Isaac region, where we are still trying to get people to receive their first and second vaccinations. It underlines just how important this issue is. In the time remaining I also highlight my concerns for our Indigenous communities around this state.