




Speech By
Michael Healy

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

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MOTION

Queensland Border Restrictions

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (5.19 pm): I begin by saying that the Palaszczuk government will always put and has always put the safety of Queenslanders first as we fight delta to protect our way of life. All of these stories we are hearing are of people coming from areas impacted by COVID, and we are not.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr HEALY: New South Wales are not. What happened to the lovely, peaceful discussion we were having? Last year the LNP called for Queensland's border—I have to be careful here because I do not want the vision of the member for Kawana to come true—to be opened between 63 and 65 times. That is how many times the LNP asked for the borders to be opened. What a risk it would have been. One of the challenges—

An opposition member: You opened it.

Mr HEALY: When the time was right, when there was no risk. It is all relative. Those opposite have to be able to understand if they were a government—which they are not and which they will likely never be—they would wield the powers of government. It is about responsibility and about making tough decisions.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr HEALY: I will get back to the tourism comments. On Thursday, 2 September in a Sky News interview the current Leader of the Opposition refused on five occasions to support Queensland's strong COVID-19 measures. The Leader of the Opposition, Scott Morrison and the LNP want to open Queensland's border which would let delta in and ruin our way of life. This is a fact that remains undisputed. We are seeing it happen in other states. The LNP put the interests of the Morrison government first, at the expense of Queenslanders and our economic recovery.

Our strong border measures have helped keep delta out of Queensland, preventing long lockdowns and allowing our economic recovery to continue. We have some semblance of normality in Queensland. Our children are at school. Some sectors of the economy are doing extremely well. They cannot build houses fast enough in Cairns. Our mining industry is booming and is unimpeded by COVID.

While our tourism industry is unprecedentedly impacted by the global pandemic, of which I am acutely aware being the member for Cairns and the Assistant Minister for Tourism, there are some pockets of our industry doing quite well because they are not in lockdown. Some of us in regional areas know that. For example, the drive market anywhere within four hours of Brisbane, particularly the Sunshine Coast and Hervey Bay, have strong bookings. I believe Western Queensland, having been out there recently, is doing quite well. There are areas that are doing quite well.

As we all know, the key to normality is vaccination. The federal government's inaction for months on establishing quarantine facilities and vaccine supply has led to the mess New South Wales and Victoria find themselves in. Last week I was very pleased to join my friend the health minister to officially open the new mass vaccination hub at the Cairns Convention Centre. Over its first three days of operation last weekend the hub administered 3,707 free vaccinations to the people of my wonderful city, including my two teenage children who received their first shots. The centre is accepting walk-ins. I understand that that is happening across the state. All of our hubs will be accepting walk-ins.

We get the importance of vaccination and we are encouraging as many people to do it as we can. In Cairns we are hoping to get as many as 18,000 people vaccinated over the coming month—the next three weekends. The Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service has delivered 105,000 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine since health services rolled out the vaccine program in February. More than 50 per cent of our population in the region has received at least one dose of the COVID vaccine. We know the vaccine is a crucial part of our COVID defence. Getting our vaccine will help protect our community and will assist us in getting back to some normality. I urge anybody who is in Cairns and the Far North to come forward and get vaccinated at this new vaccination hub. If they cannot get it there they should go and see their local GP or community pharmacy.

The federal government's inability to secure enough COVID vaccines early has led to lockdowns in New South Wales and Victoria. So far the Palaszczuk government's strong stance on borders has kept the delta strain out, which has given us this window to get vaccinated. I thank the House for the opportunity to educate the other side.