




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Vaccine

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (2.08 pm): With the arrival of COVID-19 vaccines in Queensland on Monday came the arrival of a new sense of hope and optimism that has not been felt across the state in some time. The rollout of these vaccines heralds a new stage in the fight against this virus. It is a shot in the arm for Queensland's economic hopes and the hopes of families and friends around the state and the country that they can soon reunite with those dearest to them. We know that the vaccine is a giant leap in the right direction towards restoring normalcy in our life. With that in mind, there should be no barrier for those wanting the vaccine to get it.

The fact that the vaccine has been made available free of charge by the Commonwealth government to anyone in Australia, even those who are not citizens and residents, is a truly wonderful initiative. What should not be a barrier to getting the vaccine is the cost of parking, but regrettably this is a factor for many people and it is the state government led by Annastacia Palaszczuk that is responsible. I have been on the record consistently pleading with the government to take action on the exorbitant parking fees at our state's public hospitals, particularly on the Gold Coast where constituents of the Mudgeeraba electorate face eye-watering parking prices at the Gold Coast University Hospital. I have long been concerned that these prices may deter people from seeking out medical care. Unfortunately, this issue has come home to roost at a time when access to a groundbreaking vaccine is more important than ever. It is a sad indictment on the state government that this could be the case.

Frontline health workers are those at the top of the queue for receiving the first doses of the vaccine, and rightly so. Without hesitation, across the state healthcare workers stood up in the most trying of circumstances and risked their all in continuing to serve us in the face of the pandemic. I have the greatest admiration for these staff. It might surprise many in the community to hear that these staff do not receive any reprieve when it comes to hospital parking. My office was being told during the height of the pandemic that staff at the university hospital were paying nearly \$300 a week in parking and union fees. That is just not on. When he was the health minister, the Deputy Premier was not willing to take a commonsense look at this issue and engage with car park operators to negotiate a fairer rate.

It is now at the feet of the current health minister, the member for Redcliffe, to step up and ensure that patients and Queensland's frontline staff are not being slugged unreasonable amounts of money for parking at our public hospitals. There should not be anything stopping Queenslanders wanting to get the vaccine, least of all parking fees.