




Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

Record of Proceedings, 22 April 2021

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Update; Influenza, Vaccine

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (9.51 am): The most recent data from Johns Hopkins University shows that there have now been more than 143 million positive COVID-19 cases. Sadly, more than three million people have passed away. India is now reporting on average 250,000 new cases a day. This demonstrates the scale of the COVID-19 outbreak across the world. Thanks to the excellent leadership of the Premier, the advice of the Chief Health Officer and the efforts of our amazing health workers across Queensland, we have largely been shielded from the impacts of COVID-19. We thank the people of Queensland for their willingness to put their confidence and trust in the advice of the government.

On 20 April, New Zealand authorities were notified of a New Zealand based cleaner who worked on planes bound for Australia testing positive for COVID-19. The cleaner worked on both red and green flights and is thought to have been in close or casual contact with a number of airline crew. Contact tracing of those staff members is now underway. New Zealand health authorities have released a list of venues of concern that have been visited by the positive case. As an act of absolute precaution, later today Queensland Health will publish on the Queensland COVID website the New Zealand venues of concern that the cleaner visited while infectious. Any person who has recently travelled from New Zealand to Australia should review those venues of concern. All people who visited these locations at the specific dates and times are considered casual contacts and have been asked to monitor their health for 14 days from exposure and get tested if they become symptomatic. This is not a cause for alarm, but it does show that we need to continue to remain vigilant in confronting the ongoing presence of COVID throughout the world. Overnight, we have seen new cases in Perth and Sydney.

As we continue to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Palaszczuk government is also continuing to ensure that our community is protected against influenza. This season, it is vital for all Queenslanders aged six months and older to get vaccinated against the flu. I encourage all members to get their flu shot. The best time to get the influenza vaccine to help protect against getting the flu over winter is from the end of this month. Last year we saw a significant decrease in flu cases due to social distancing and meticulous hand hygiene. We thank everyone for their amazing effort and ask that they continue it. It is important to remember that we cannot become complacent and that we are still in this pandemic. It is important to avoid preventable flu patient hospital admissions during the winter months. Moreover, we need to prevent people from being infected simultaneously with flu and COVID-19.

Government funded flu vaccines will be distributed across Queensland at the end of this month, and eligible Queenslanders should book an appointment to get vaccinated. This year, all flu vaccines offer protection against four strains of influenza that we have seen overseas, including the vaccine for those aged over 65. Although the flu vaccine does not protect against COVID-19, it can reduce the severity and spread of influenza, which may make a person more susceptible to other respiratory illnesses like COVID-19. There is still flu circulating every year and, just like COVID-19, it can be fatal,

which is why it is vital Queenslanders book in for their flu shot this year. I also remind Queenslanders that it is recommended to wait at least 14 days between the COVID-19 vaccine and the influenza vaccine.

Finally, I extend my sincerest gratitude to all those GPs, pharmacies, chemists, aged-care homes and all other vaccination providers assisting in the rollout of the flu vaccine this year. Your assistance in helping to protect our Queensland community is greatly appreciated.