



Speech By  
**Hon. Yvette D'Ath**


**MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE**

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Record of Proceedings, 25 May 2021

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Coronavirus, Update; Palliative Care Week**

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (9.54 am): I wish to give the House an update on what the Premier said in relation to Victoria. The Victorian government has just released an updated statement saying that restrictions have been reimposed in Greater Melbourne following five new locally acquired cases of COVID-19. The Acting Premier, James Merlino, said that from 6 pm on Tuesday private gatherings will be limited to five visitors per day, public gatherings are limited to 30 people, and masks will need to be worn indoors unless an exemption is applicable. This comes after four new cases of COVID-19 were reported yesterday, breaking an 86-day streak of no locally transmitted cases. A fifth, reported after midnight, was symptomatic before the first of Monday's cases was declared.

The Chief Health Officer of Queensland has indicated that people who have plans to travel to Melbourne may want to reconsider those plans at this time because, as we know, things evolve very quickly when it comes to COVID and local community transmission. Anyone travelling from Greater Melbourne who has been to any of these venues and who will arrive from 1 am tomorrow will have to go into government hotel quarantine for 14 days. Anyone else who has been to any of the venues—and I call on anyone who has been in Victoria to check the Victorian website and the Queensland website regularly for updates on the venues—should be reaching out to Queensland Health. There is now an online contact-tracing system where people can register. They should test, they should isolate and Queensland Health will contact them and let them know what they should do going forward.

This week is National Palliative Care Week. No doubt, members would have noticed Parliament House lit up in maroon and navy overnight to mark this occasion. Sadly, in our lifetimes we will all know a friend, a loved one or a colleague diagnosed with a life-limiting illness. Palliative care teams throughout Queensland do an amazing job caring for people with these illnesses, and I want to acknowledge their efforts as we mark this very important Palliative Care Week.

Since coming to office in 2015, we have increased funding for palliative care to almost \$150 million a year, around a 50 per cent increase. This is in addition to the \$12.9 million delivered to non-government organisations for palliative care services in the community. I acknowledge the Treasurer, who is a former health minister. In May 2015, very early on, we launched the Queensland statewide strategy for end-of-life care and simultaneously launched the Queensland Clinical Senate's charter for care of adult patients at the end of life which was aimed to further educate health professionals on how to recognise the care needs of terminally ill patients.

I have heard some commentary that some people believe that our actions on introducing the voluntary assisted dying legislation are somehow putting that ahead of palliative care, but right back when we were first elected in 2015 we started to act to ensure funding increases and also further work done around education and support in palliative care.

As our population continues to grow and age, and as our rate of chronic and life-limiting illnesses increases, so too will demand for palliative care services. We want to ensure Queenslanders have access to compassionate care in the most appropriate setting at the end of their lives, no matter where they live. That is why since 2015 we have employed over 7½ thousand extra nurses, including midwives—sadly, as we know, terminal illness does not just affect adults—as well as earmarked an additional \$171 million for statewide palliative care services. The extra funding we are delivering will employ more frontline palliative care workers and enable more home based hospice care. It will allow more people to spend their final days at home or in a home-like setting surrounded by loved ones.

The additional funding will complement and build on ongoing existing investments in the Queensland palliative care system. We are investing \$17 million in the Care in the Right Setting, CaRS, initiative for palliative care services in community based settings with a focus on regional Queensland. These services include a new paediatric palliative care outreach collaborative for new regional and remote services for children, assistive technology through an extension in the Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme, specialist telehealth services and a specialised palliative care room within the Longreach Hospital which I look forward to opening shortly.

The Palaszczuk government is also immensely proud of our additional \$8.25 million investment in Hummingbird House to support the incredible and difficult work they do. I want to acknowledge the staff out there. I visited very early on when I became health minister and saw the incredible work they do. It is a very difficult job, but they find it extremely rewarding to know they can be there to support families at the most difficult time.

Effective palliative care will improve a terminally ill person's quality of life. It can assist in managing their pain and suffering. It can provide some level of comfort to family and friends. We are committed to ensuring our palliative care services support Queenslanders throughout the state, no matter where they live.

As we introduce the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill, it is important for the community and members of parliament to understand these are not mutually exclusive issues. Palliative care is just as important when we are discussing end-of-life care. This was recognised by the QLRC which said, 'Voluntary assisted dying should complement, not detract from, high-quality and accessible palliative care.' We can do both. It is about giving Queenslanders a choice. That is why we have a Human Rights Act in Queensland. It puts the person's individual rights at the centre of care, as it should.