




Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Young, Dr J

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (9.57 am): There have been many reasons Queensland has weathered the pandemic so well, but the main one is without a doubt the guidance and efforts of our hardworking Chief Health Officer, Dr Jeannette Young PSM. Queensland is fortunate to have had the best Chief Health Officer in Australia and probably the world. Dr Young never fails to thank Queenslanders at our daily media conferences. The thanks should go to Dr Young. Her advice, her planning and her leadership are second to none. I am not exaggerating when I say that she has saved lives—lots of lives.

As honourable members would be aware, Dr Young has been appointed Queensland's 27th Governor. This is her last week as Chief Health Officer, a role she started when she was just 43. Dr Young's career is too extensive and her accomplishments too abundant to convey in a ministerial statement, but let me give an abridged version. Dr Young graduated from the University of Sydney with a Bachelor of Medicine and a Bachelor of Surgery in 1986. That same year she joined Westmead Hospital as an intern. By 1994 she had risen to the ranks of assistant director of medical services at Westmead.

Lucky for us, Dr Young chose to move to the best state in the country, Queensland, in 1994 to take up the position of executive director of medical services at Rockhampton Base Hospital. I know how happy she has been in the last few days to go back to Rockhampton to promote vaccinations, to see her old home where she lived in front of the hospital and to recall some of those days very fondly.

Ms Palaszczuk: And the nurse who used to work with her.

Mrs D'ATH: I take that interjection. In 1999 she became Executive Director of Medical Services at the Princess Alexandra Hospital and in 2005 she was appointed the state's Chief Health Officer.

Dr Young will no doubt be remembered for leading Queensland through the COVID-19 pandemic—and so she should, because she has done a stellar job—but she should also be recognised for improving the public health of Queenslanders. At the time she became Chief Health Officer, around 20 per cent of Queenslanders smoked. That has since halved. Under Dr Young's watch, childhood immunisation also rose from 77 per cent to just under 95 per cent. I know that she wants that target for COVID vaccinations. Dr Young was also instrumental in establishing a medical school in Central Queensland—I know how excited she is that the first student will be coming in next year—and the state's world-class aeromedical retrieval service through partnerships with the Royal Flying Doctor Service and LifeFlight. Dr Young is an inspiring woman, a warm and caring person and an intelligent and passionate professional. She will be an exceptional Governor. We thank her for her service and will soon say 'Your Excellency'.

On a personal note, I thank Dr Jeannette Young for her support while I have been the health minister. I have enjoyed her passion, compassion, empathy, absolute focus and dedication to keeping Queenslanders safe and saving lives through this pandemic. As the Premier said, there have been

many sleepless nights. She has taken her role extremely seriously. It has weighed heavily. She knew the risks in every single decision she made. There were many late nights and very early mornings. In fact, everyone comments that she is the hardest working health professional in Queensland Health. I have no doubt about that, and that takes nothing away from our amazing health workers. Dr Young leaves us in the best possible position to open up our state, our borders and our economy, with only 17 active cases and no community clusters. Dr Young, I thank you on behalf of my staff, the Department of Health and Queenslanders.