



Speech By  
**Aaron Harper**


**MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA**

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Record of Proceedings, 24 February 2022

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Federal Government, Residential Aged Care**

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (6.03 pm): It is great to be back in the parliament dealing with important issues this week, but we are also able to look back over the last few months as we have dealt with the Omicron variant of COVID-19. It has affected many. Most of all, I feel for all of those families who have lost loved ones over recent months. It is really highlighted in the aged-care space. Sadly and tragically, it is back in the national spotlight.

In Queensland there have been 506 deaths since 13 December, 267—over 50 per cent—in aged care. I have had worried constituents ringing my office to speak to me about their elderly parents who had contracted COVID-19, as did the staff, and they did not get boosted even though they met all the criteria. Tragically, another wrote to me about the absolutely disturbing state of care her mother was left in in her dying days—too graphic to detail—all, it seems, due to the lack of availability of staff. These shocking images will remain with the family forever. No-one should ever see their parents suffer like that at end of life.

As a state MP I found it very difficult to get details from the primary healthcare network about how many residents in my area of Thuringowa and Townsville in residential aged-care facilities had received their COVID vaccine booster. Just imagine for a moment that your elderly, frail, frightened parent, who is unable to see family, locked in their room—add a dose of early onset dementia—staff coming in with full PPE when they could get staff. Those days must be awful for our most vulnerable. The reality is that is someone's mum or dad. These are people who have worked hard all their lives and they deserve a decent level of care.

We all know, and it is very clear, that aged care is the responsibility of the federal government, so I looked to our federal member. I wrote to the member for Herbert and asked him what was happening in our communities with regard to the vaccine. I table my letter and his response.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 18 January 2022, from the member for Thuringowa, Mr Aaron Harper MP, to the federal member for Herbert, Mr Phillip Thompson OAM MP, titled 'Covid booster shots in residential aged care facilities' [211](#).

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 24 January 2022, from the federal member for Herbert, Mr Phillip Thompson OAM MP, to the member for Thuringowa, Mr Aaron Harper MP, titled 'COVID-19 vaccination boosters in residential aged care facilities' [212](#).

His response is misleading. He said he can advise that the booster program for residents in residential aged-care facilities is expected to be completed by 29 January 2022. What a load of rubbish! People have still not got it. I say to the member for Herbert, 'This is not worth the paper it is written on!' Do not leave our most vulnerable in those states! In North Queensland we have seen the Army respond in times of disasters like cyclones and floods. Today we have Army personnel, the ADF, going into residential aged-care facilities because the federal Minister for Aged Care is an absolute disgrace. He would rather go to cricket than deal with the crisis in aged care. It is time to get it fixed. It is time for the federal government to step up and look after the hardworking people in our residential aged-care facilities and get the boosters done. The member for Herbert should hang his head in shame. He has misled the people of Townsville by saying they all got their COVID vaccine when clearly that is not the case.