




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR BANCROFT

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PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Response

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (2.27 pm): On Monday night the TJ Ryan Foundation did an excellent presentation in the red chamber on the topic 'Plague, policy and people: a history of policy response to plague in Queensland'. I gave a brief speech outlining the government response to COVID to put it into context. It was illuminating. There were many parallels between COVID and the plague outbreak in Queensland in 1900. Some 57 Queenslanders died at that time. As I said, it was very illuminating. The speech gave me a chance to highlight our outstanding response to the COVID pandemic.

At the pandemic's peak, over 1,000 beds in our public hospitals were occupied by COVID patients. Throughout the pandemic more than 8.6 million PCR tests were conducted and more than 12 million vaccinations were administered across 925 different vaccination locations. Since 13 December last year we have had more than 132,000 bed days occupied by COVID patients. Nearly 350,000 staff days have been lost due to isolation or quarantine since March this year, and over 493 public health directions have been issued.

The participants at the seminar were really impressed with what our Queensland Health staff had done in response to the pandemic. They were proud of what we had achieved and it made me think how different the approach of the Palaszczuk government is to that of the LNP. The Palaszczuk government lauds Queensland Health staff and supports those who have worked so hard in this pandemic, but the LNP always attacks and undermines our Queensland Health staff. The LNP called for the borders to be opened 63 times which would have placed intolerable—

Ms Lauga: Sixty-four times!

Mr WHITING: Sixty-four; I stand corrected. That would have placed intolerable pressure on our frontline staff. It constantly criticises our emergency department workers who are either working double shifts or triple shifts and it undermines our paramedics by continually talking about the timeliness of our ambulance response. Let us never forget that the LNP sacked 4,400 Queensland Health staff, including 1,800 Queensland nurses. Let us compare that with the Palaszczuk government. We have put on over 15,000 frontline staff since we came into government. We are employing over 9,000 more frontline health staff in this term. We are building three new hospitals whilst undertaking 11 refurbishments and building one new cancer centre, and we pay our nurses fairly given that the EBA has got up with over 90 per cent acceptance.