




Speech By
Shane King

MEMBER FOR KURWONGBAH

Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2022

ADJOURNMENT

Aged Care

 **Mr KING** (Kurwongbah—ALP) (7.16 pm): I rise to express my deep disappointment at the experience of Queenslanders living in aged-care facilities managed by the LNP federal government. I know that responsibility for aged care sits primarily with the federal government, but there is no denying our government is a key stakeholder in aged-care discussions because they concern the treatment of Queensland residents and because, as operators and regulators of our own aged-care facilities, we have some expertise in the area.

Before I go further though I want to extend my sincere and heartfelt sympathies to families who have lost loved ones to COVID-19. When we opened the borders at the end of last year we did not hide that we were in for tough times. As much as we hoped it would not happen, all the evidence pointed to the likelihood of more COVID in the community, particularly amongst older Queenslanders. As a member of this place I listened, and my staff listened, to the turning of the tide of public opinion about our border policies throughout the latter part of 2021. It went from the majority wanting to keep them closed to an ever-increasing desire to see them open. The call to reunite with loved ones interstate, to travel for work and recreation, to relocate across the country, all without quarantine costs and requirements, was strong from the community. I can understand that. I have family in Western Australia and I have lost family in Western Australia during COVID-19.

Despite the pressure on our government to throw open the borders—pressure from the media, pressure from the LNP and pressure from the Prime Minister—we maintained our position that every eligible Queenslanders should have the opportunity to have two doses of an approved COVID-19 vaccine before we reopened. I thank the Premier, the health minister, our former and current chief health officers and our leadership team for standing strong on that. I have no doubt it saved lives.

We ran pop-up vaccination clinics right across the state in addition to regular vaccination hubs, encouraging Queenslanders to get the jab. By contrast, I have heard stories from locals with loved ones in aged-care facilities about last minute rescheduling of planned vaccination days and about vaccination days being cancelled altogether. If I was hearing these stories I am sure LNP federal members were hearing them too. I know for a fact they heard them on the occasions when my office passed on the details. So when we hear that over one half of the COVID-19 deaths in Queensland have been residents of federally subsidised aged-care facilities, I cannot fathom how the federal LNP government failed these victims and their families so badly in their duty of care in their own facilities in a sector that, for the most part, they regulate and control. But then again, getting along to the cricket, laps at Bathurst and ukulele lessons probably take up a bit of time. It makes me really mad and sad to think more lives could have been saved if the LNP had spent more time mitigating the risk of COVID-19 and less time criticising our government for doing exactly that.