




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 22 February 2022

ADJOURNMENT

Coronavirus, Aged Care; Batterham, Mr C

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (7.15 pm): This year we have seen many vulnerable aged-care residents in Queensland abandoned by the federal government and their failed vaccine rollout. In my own electorate this failure has resulted in the tragic loss of lives. At Jeta Gardens in Bethania at least 15 residents have passed away due to COVID-19. It should never have come to this.

My heart goes out to the families of all aged-care residents who have lost their lives. Many have reached out to my office still searching for answers. I also want to acknowledge the remaining residents who have seen a decline in their quality of living. Many have been placed in lockdown, isolated from loved ones and not able to access the care they need due to staffing pressures.

Finally, I want to thank the incredibly hardworking staff who have been working overtime to care for their patients. I want to thank each and every one of them for the incredible work they do keeping some of our community's most vulnerable people safe. However, I say again: this should never have happened. Residents should have had their booster shots. This should have been the federal government's top priority.

The Morrison government has had months to plan the booster rollout in aged care. They have failed. These are our most vulnerable community members and it is not good enough that they were not vaccinated when they were supposed to be. Families have been left in the dark not knowing if their loved ones have been vaccinated, let alone received a booster. We have had a royal commission into aged care and still we have not seen action. It is an absolute failure.

Finally, while I am on my feet I want to pass on my condolences to the family of Colin Batterham. I have previously mentioned Colin and his neighbour Rebecca in this place. I met them three years ago when Colin's landlord forced him and his fellow neighbours to sign tenancy agreements riddled with errors as well as pay for inedible food in their retirement village. When Colin spoke out about this, his landlord threatened him with eviction, but Colin stood strong and fought his landlord. Most importantly, we had a huge win for our community and these residents.

Sadly, Colin passed away earlier this month, on 3 February. I want to pass on my condolences to his family, friends and neighbours. Colin's courage had real impact. I am really proud to have known him and to have fought for him. Supporting those most vulnerable in our community is absolutely what Labor is all about and Colin knew that. Rest in peace, Colin.