




Speech By  
**Hon. Dr Steven Miles**  
**MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA**

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Record of Proceedings, 31 March 2022

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Coronavirus, Hotel Quarantine

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics Infrastructure) (11.16 am): Keeping borders open whilst supporting our economic recovery requires a commitment to a quarantine and isolation management approach that can accommodate a broad range of scenarios, including vaccination status, international border policy and the potential for other variants. As at 14 March, 168,057 people had been through hotel quarantine or isolation throughout the pandemic. At its peak, there were over 5,110 people at one time across 22 hotels. Ninety-three different hotels have been used in total. A peak of around 1,200 police per day were committed to COVID operations, including hotel quarantine and border operations. Quarantine and isolation health measures have kept Queenslanders safe and continue to support recovery from the pandemic.

The cost of renting out entire hotels is significant, but it pales in comparison to the impact lockdowns and harsher restrictions have on business. A week-long lockdown is estimated to cost over \$700 million in lost economic activity. Throughout this pandemic the Palaszczuk government has always ensured we are prepared for whatever might come. To deliver fit-for-purpose facilities as quickly as possible, the state fast tracked implementation of the quarantine management task force incorporating experts. The task force retains a network of isolation options in line with public health advice, including regional hotels.

The Queensland Regional Accommodation Centre at Wellcamp allows us to tackle what comes next and continues to keep Queenslanders safe. Wellcamp is supporting Queensland's response to the Omicron wave and any future waves of the pandemic. The facility is also able to be used for emergent need and has been available to local district disaster management groups for evacuation and emergency accommodation during the recent South-East Queensland floods. I can advise the House the Queensland government is currently talking to New South Wales about how they might use the Wellcamp facilities to provide temporary accommodation for people whose homes have been impacted by flooding.

As of today, 31 March, the only hotels left operational are six regional hotels retained for the purposes of isolation of COVID-well vulnerable people in the community. They are in Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Gold Coast and Mount Isa. These arrangements will be scaled down subject to Queensland Health advice regarding the current wave. The Novotel Brisbane Airport, which has capacity to take quarantine guests in emergent circumstances such as transit, will remain available. From 5 February to 31 March the cost of quarantine and isolation hotels totals \$26.9 million.

Since opening Wellcamp and beginning the hotel decommissioning, we have saved \$8.5 million per month. By the time the additional hotels such as those in regional Queensland cease in the coming months, there will be a further saving of \$5.7 million per month. The reduction of hotels has been done in accordance with advice from Queensland Health and the Chief Health Officer, having regard to the health modelling at all times. The updated network strategy is determined by the program board.

The exit from use of hotels has been well planned in a staggered way to ensure sufficient contingency to support our healthcare system. We have an obligation to respect the contractual notice periods of each hotel and their contract expiry dates. When a decision is made not to keep a hotel operational, it does not mean that those contractual obligations cease immediately. We do, however, realise savings associated with no longer paying for the security, health and community support costs at those facilities. All of this has been done despite the fact that the constitution is very clear that quarantine is a responsibility of the Commonwealth. These measures have kept Queenslanders safe in accordance with the health advice, even while those opposite repeatedly called for our borders to be opened and quarantine to be ended well before the health advice suggested it should.