




Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

Record of Proceedings, 24 May 2022

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Federal Labor Government; Influenza

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (9.51 am): I would like to add my voice to the congratulations to Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and the entire Labor team on their election.

Government members: Hear, hear!

Mrs D'ATH: It sounds wonderful, I agree. I look forward to working with the new federal government in relation to health reform.

Queensland has seen very little flu circulating in the community over the last two years. It is for this reason we have been warning of a severe flu season this year, and it is already upon us. Influenza is spreading across Queensland and our numbers have doubled in the past week. This year's flu case numbers have already surpassed those of the entire 2020-21 flu season. In the next fortnight we could see upwards of 500 flu hospitalisations with the peak yet to come.

This year influenza A is the dominant strain. Influenza A affects younger cohorts than influenza B, results in more severe disease than influenza B and is associated with higher hospital admission rates than influenza B. Queensland has not had an influenza outbreak since 2017, and even then one-third of the infections were influenza B. This year 98 per cent of the cases reported are influenza A. That is why we have announced that from today all Queenslanders will have free access to a flu vaccination until the end of June. Queenslanders who want to protect themselves from the flu can get vaccinated at GPs and accredited pharmacies.

Influenza A can be deadly, so we need to get as many people vaccinated as quickly as possible. We already know how busy our GPs are, and since our announcement yesterday some practices have already seen an increase in the number of patients who want to access a free flu shot. This shows that the cost of the vaccine has been a factor in some people's decision to get vaccinated. We know that making it free will encourage a greater uptake of the flu vaccine this season. This will help to ease pressure on GPs and our busy public health workers by reducing incidence of respiratory illness in the community. Importantly, it will also assist businesses and the economy because with more workers vaccinated we will hopefully see a reduction in workforce shortages that would otherwise have occurred due to the flu. The Palaszczuk government is investing \$40 million to provide free flu vaccines this year. We are leading the nation with this initiative. Come forward to get your free flu shot. Protect yourselves and your loved ones.