




Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

Record of Proceedings, 8 November 2022

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cervical Cancer

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (9.54 am): Over the past three years we know that one health issue has towered over all others. While the focus has been on COVID-19, other diseases have continued cutting short the lives of Queenslanders. Cancer, for example, does not care about COVID. That is why it is important we promote events like National Cervical Cancer Awareness Week if we want to make cervical cancer history.

Queensland has led the world in cervical cancer prevention for the past 20 years and efforts to reinforce preventive measures for cervical cancer means elimination of this insidious disease is now within reach. University of Queensland Professor Ian Frazer and his team helped make that a viable goal when they developed a vaccine for the human papillomavirus, which is responsible for 70 per cent of cervical cancers. Gardisal, as it is known, was first administered in 2006 and will protect millions of women around the world, but we cannot be complacent.

A woman, or person with a cervix, who has ever had sexual contact and is aged between 25 and 74 should complete a cervical screening test every five years. Regrettably, only 62.4 per cent of eligible Australian women are screening as frequently as recommended. This means that about 38 per cent of eligible Australian women have either never screened or are lapsed screeners, which is extremely concerning when 70 per cent of cervical cancer occurs in women who have never been screened or who have let their screening lapse. Some women, or people with a cervix, may find the process invasive, distressing or embarrassing. However, I have brilliant news for them. Self-collection is now an option available in Queensland.

In Queensland, women, or persons with a cervix, living in rural and remote communities also have access to specially trained registered nurses via the Mobile Women's Health Service. They have encouraged thousands of women, and people with a cervix, to be proactive about their health and wellbeing, including being up to date with their cervical screening. In fact, in 2020-21, the team travelled nearly 120,000 kilometres to deliver more than 3,000 occasions of service, including over 1,500 cervical screens across 96 Queensland locations. It is an astounding accomplishment and demonstrates the sheer determination and passion our frontline healthcare staff have for their communities.

I would like to take a moment to congratulate a former colleague to many of the members of this House, Vicky Darling. Vicky was the member for Sandgate from 2006 to 2012 and served as the state's environment minister in 2011 and 2012. She is now the newly minted CEO of the Australian Cervical Cancer Foundation. Most importantly, I want this statement to serve as a reminder to go and get a cervical screening test because that simple act could save someone's life.