




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Women and Girls' Health Strategy

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women) (10.04 am): As the Minister for Health and the Minister for Women, I know all too well the challenges that women face when it comes to health care. That is why I am so proud to release the consultation survey and draft of Queensland's first ever Queensland Women and Girls' Health Strategy. The survey is an important opportunity for women and girls across Queensland to share their health experiences and to help shape the future of women's health policy and outcomes. We know that women have historically experienced discrimination and a lack of specified support in our health system. Indeed, whilst women have a higher life expectancy than men, they are likely to experience more years with a disability and have multiple chronic health conditions. We know that these impacts are further exacerbated for women from diverse backgrounds.

Only two years ago, one in three women in Queensland reported having their health concerns dismissed. I have heard these stories firsthand across Queensland time and time again. We have a lot to learn. Why is the prevalence of endometriosis higher among young women compared to previous generations? What are the causes of pelvic pain and how can we best treat it? How can we better fund and support perimenopause and menopause programs to minimise the impact to women's mental health and social and physiological wellbeing?

Our government is committed to meeting the health needs of all women, addressing the social determinants of women's health and improving health equity. To do this, we need to hear directly from women and girls in Queensland. The survey and consultation draft of the strategy are available on the Queensland Health website and consultation is open until 19 October.

We also know that women face barriers to accessing mental health. We know that women experience higher rates of anxiety and eating disorders. The fact that the number of people admitted and receiving care for eating disorders has increased about 30 per cent to 35 per cent since COVID is extremely alarming. That is why the Palaszczuk government recently announced that \$40 million will be invested in community-based eating disorder services. As a community, we are just beginning to hear women sharing their experiences of conditions like postnatal depression, or the grief and distress associated with miscarriage.

Today is R U OK? Day. It is important that we use this day, and others, to continue to give space and validate the experiences and stories of women, and everyone in the community, who are suffering from mental health challenges. R U OK? Day is an important reminder to check in with those around you and to let them know that support is available if they need it. This R U OK? Day, let those around you know that you are there for them, because one conversation can save a life.