




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Ralstonia

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women) (9.55 am): I would like to update the House on a significant matter impacting Australian hospitals. On Friday, Queensland Health issued an urgent patient safety alert advising hospitals to remove certain saline products immediately following a bacterium outbreak which had been identified in New South Wales. The products appeared to be contaminated with the bacterium *Ralstonia*. The TGA issued a quarantine notice at the same time. *Ralstonia* is normally found in soil and water. Whilst it does not normally cause infection in humans, it has previously been tied to outbreaks in healthcare settings from contaminated medical fluids. It is especially concerning to those with significant underlying medical conditions or who have implanted medical devices.

This is a national issue first identified in New South Wales and involves products imported from overseas. In mid-September, New South Wales health authorities asked Australian states to be on the lookout for *Ralstonia* cases after a cluster of infections were identified but with no apparent cause. There are now 44 suspected cases across the country. Ever since the New South Wales initial alert, Queensland laboratories have been on the lookout for *Ralstonia* cases. The organism was identified in the blood of an elderly patient in a Queensland private hospital who has subsequently passed away. I take this opportunity to express my condolences and heartfelt wishes to the family of this patient who I am sure will be feeling the loss at this very sad time. I can also confirm today that there are five probable cases now in one other private hospital.

Last week, microbiologists in the ACT identified Indian and Greek saline products as a possible source of contamination. These products have been immediately withdrawn from use in Queensland. I am advised that this brand of saline is in use in seven Queensland Health hospitals and facilities, but we are not currently aware of any cases of *Ralstonia* in Queensland public hospitals. Our Central Pharmacy is also working with Queensland Health sites to ensure there is sufficient stock of alternative saline products. I am not aware of how many private hospitals and day hospitals have been using these products, but they have all been notified to quarantine them from use. Queensland Health representatives are continuing to actively participate in the national outbreak investigation meetings which are being led by New South Wales. I will continue to keep Queenslanders informed of these developments. The Chief Health Officer will also provide an update later today.