




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) (9.46 am): What a wonderful week it is—Queensland Women's Week. Not content with just one day, in Queensland we will celebrate and acknowledge women from 3 to 10 March. It is a good time to recognise our women health heroes—our doctors, surgeons, ambos, nurses and allied health professionals—who save lives and provide care every single day. I also want to particularly acknowledge the role of First Nations women who, for more than 3,000 generations, have provided wisdom, leadership and protection of two of the world's oldest continuing living cultures in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

I was so pleased to join the Premier yesterday in launching the first ever Queensland Women and Girls' Health Strategy, backed by \$1 billion for women's health and wellbeing over the next five years. This strategy reflects the voices of over 12,000 women who shared their personal stories and experiences of our health system. Seventy per cent of the women and girls who responded told us that mental health and wellbeing were in their top three health issues, so we have launched an Australian-first dedicated women's health phone line to provide mental health and wellbeing support and are providing funding for 50 new social workers across the state.

Balveen and her daughter Viva, who feature on the cover of the Women and Girls' Health Strategy, told us about the importance of health education. She said, 'We need to normalise conversations about our bodies and wellbeing so that our girls have the right words to advocate for themselves.' We are providing more and better information on women's health issues. We heard that the most significant barriers to accessing health care were service availability and the cost of services, so we are opening new walk-in, nurse-led clinics so that people can access more health care closer to home.

Mr Head interjected.

Mr Dick: Stop shouting at women.

Mr Head interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Members will come to order. Thank you, Deputy Premier. We do not need your assistance.

Ms FENTIMAN: Mr Speaker, I would not have thought talking about women's pain and endometriosis would attract such criticism from those opposite, but women in Queensland absolutely deserve us to be listening to them and acting on what they have told us. Women experiencing endo and pelvic pain told us that they do not feel listened to. They told us that their concerns are sometimes dismissed by healthcare professionals, resulting in misdiagnosis and leading to years of persistent pain.

Some of the medical advice they received included the following: 'Maybe try swimming off the pain.' 'Don't worry, the pain is in your head.' 'There's nothing wrong with you.' My personal favourite is: 'Maybe peppermint tea is really the only viable option at this point.' This is why we will now be investing in better pathways to diagnosis, care and support for people experiencing these chronic conditions with an \$18 million boost for endo and pelvic pain.

These are just some of the dozens of initiatives being rolled out as part of this \$1 billion investment over five years. We will do more for women experiencing endo and pelvic pain, more for women experiencing reproductive challenges due to illness, and more for maternal health. I want to thank every woman and girl who shared their story. This strategy is our commitment to the women and girls of Queensland. We hear you, we believe you, and now we are taking action for you.