




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Miles Labor Government

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women) (10.10 am): It was such a privilege to visit Rockhampton last week as part of our government's community cabinet. I met with doctors, nurses, midwives and allied health professionals, visited the new Medicare urgent care clinic and met with a GP who is undertaking advanced obstetrics training thanks to our government's investment.

More than anything else, it was a real privilege to meet with Amanda and Nathan White. As the Premier has said this morning, they sat down with both of us and the member for Keppel and bravely shared their story of Amanda's battle with stage 4 cancer. The next day, we had the honour of standing with them and announcing that the Miles Labor government will invest almost \$8 million to deliver a new PET/CT scanner at the Rockhampton Hospital. It was an emotional morning, but a very important one. That scanner will mean better cancer care and diagnosis services for Rockhampton locals and it will eliminate the need to travel vast distances to receive those vital scans. However, it is no small undertaking. This is advanced equipment that requires lead shielding bunkers, radioisotope storage and highly trained nuclear medical professionals. It is worth it because we know that it will make a difference in the lives of so many locals in Central Queensland.

Speaking of making a difference, I can also announce our government will roll out training for pharmacists to allow them to prescribe hormonal contraception to Queensland women. This move will break down barriers that women face in accessing hormonal contraception, particularly in regional and rural areas where seeing a GP can be difficult and costly. We know that 83 per cent of Australian women will use contraception at some point in their life so it makes sense that we make the process as easy and as cost-effective as possible. Last year, the Australian Senate found that many women continue to face barriers in accessing sexual and reproductive health care. This move is the latest step our government is taking to address those barriers. In order to participate in the service, pharmacists will have to undergo specific training to ensure contraception is prescribed safely and appropriately. I look forward to those services beginning from July this year onwards.

Finally, today is National Close the Gap Day. As the world's oldest continuing living cultures who, for 3,000 generations, have been the original healers of this land, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people absolutely deserve access to high-quality, culturally safe health care. In 2020, the Miles government created the strongest health equity legislation ever enacted in this country and we are the only jurisdiction to have a Chief First Nations Health Officer.

Recently, along with the Minister for Treaty, I was pleased to release the First Nations First Health Strategy—a bold, 10-year vision built in partnership with First Nations communities. We are beginning to see progress. Compared to other jurisdictions, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland have the longest life expectancy and the smallest gap in life expectancy. An Aboriginal or

Torres Strait Islander baby born today in Queensland will have an average life significantly longer than those born a decade ago. Queensland is increasing the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies born with a healthy birth weight. We are very close to meeting the target of 91 per cent, with 89.2 percent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies born with a healthy birth weight in 2021-22. Of course, we know that there is more work to do, but the Miles government remains resolutely committed to doing everything we can to close the gap and deliver better health outcomes for First Nations Queenslanders.