



Speech By  
**Hon. Shannon Fentiman**


**MEMBER FOR WATERFORD**

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Record of Proceedings, 20 August 2024

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

### Health System

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women) (9.59 am): We know that Queenslanders are feeling the pinch from the rising cost of living. That is why we are taking action to keep more money in Queenslanders' pockets, like \$1,000 off household power bills and 50-cent fares. Our record health budget is squarely focused on making sure Queenslanders do not have to choose between putting food on the table and accessing the care they need.

Over 77 years ago, Queensland became the first state in Australia to provide free health care to all and the Miles Labor government is proud to continue that tradition. Primary care, such as that provided by GPs, has been the responsibility of the federal government, but from talking to families in our communities we know that many Queenslanders either cannot get an appointment when they need it or, if they can, they simply cannot afford it. That is why we are stepping up and providing more primary care in the community than ever before.

Our seven satellite hospitals, which are now open across the south-east, are providing free and accessible healthcare while taking pressure off our busy emergency departments. Our minor injury and illness clinics have treated over 110,000 Queenslanders for conditions ranging from respiratory infections and viral illnesses to head injuries and rashes. That is in addition to more than 52,000 outpatient appointments delivered across all seven sites. More than 160,000 Queenslanders have received free care closer to home as part of our nation-leading Satellite Hospitals Program. However, we are not stopping there.

Our new network of nurse-led walk-in clinics will be open seven days a week from 8 am to 10 pm, offering a lifeline to those in need. From conjunctivitis and simple respiratory conditions to cuts and urinary tract infections, those clinics will be a first port of call for minor ailments.

Let us not forget the valuable role of community pharmacists. The Queensland Community Pharmacy Scope of Practice Pilot is empowering our pharmacists to prescribe medicines for and treat common health conditions, wellbeing services and chronic disease programs. Ten pharmacists and six pharmacies are currently participating in the pilot, which will expand across the state.

Of course, we are helping Queenslanders to protect themselves against serious infections by providing free vaccinations, including free vaccinations against the flu. This year alone, around 1.6 million Queenslanders have taken up the offer of a free jab, including hundreds at the Ekka. In February of this year we made the RSV immunisation free for all babies up to eight months of age and free for First Nations babies up to 20 months of age if they have complex medical conditions. With more than 33,000 doses administered, we have seen RSV hospitalisations drop by 49 per cent. We have basically eradicated RSV for newborn babies here in Queensland. We are investing \$90 million over three years to deliver free meningococcal B vaccines to 450,000 children and adolescents.

We are working hard to remove financial barriers to essential health care, but our work is far from over. Our government will continue to work hard every day to ensure every Queenslanders has access to the care they need, closer to home and without worrying about the cost.