



Speech By  
**Hon. Shannon Fentiman**


**MEMBER FOR WATERFORD**

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**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Whooping Cough; Thornton, Dr M, AM**

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women) (10.06 am): The Miles Labor government is committed to protecting the health of every Queensland, no matter where they live and no matter how old they are. With Queensland currently experiencing an unprecedented surge in whooping cough cases, we are urging families, and especially pregnant women across the state, to make sure they get vaccinated. We know that vaccines save lives and vaccination during pregnancy is the best way to protect newborn babies from whooping cough until they are old enough to be vaccinated themselves. For anyone who has seen a little baby with whooping cough—I would urge you to get vaccinated.

So far this year we have seen over 7,000 cases of whooping cough, compared to just 104 at the same time last year. Alarming, over the last four years we have seen the proportion of pregnant women being vaccinated fall by over five per cent. Given that whooping cough can lead to hospitalisation or sadly even death for infants, it is important that our pregnant mums get their vaccinations. As AMA Queensland President Nick Yim said, 'Anyone who has seen a baby struggling to breathe with whooping cough will never forget it.' Newborns cannot be vaccinated, which is why it is so important that everyone around them who can be vaccinated is. Dr Cathryn Hester from the RACGP has said, 'I urge anyone who's pregnant or has a baby to book an appointment with their GP and get vaccinated as soon as you can.'

Whooping cough vaccines are free under the National Immunisation Program during pregnancy and for infants aged two, four, six and 18 months. Children aged four years and adolescents aged 12 to 13 years receive their dose as part of the Queensland School Immunisation Program. My message to all Queenslanders is: get vaccinated against whooping cough to protect yourselves, your children, your parents, your grandparents, your colleagues and your friends.

Whilst I am on my feet, I also want to talk about the formidable Merle Thornton, who sadly passed away yesterday. In 1965 Merle Thornton and her friend Rosalie Bognor chained themselves to a bar rail at the Regatta Hotel to protest the exclusion of serving women in Queensland pubs. Her passing is a profound loss, but I know that her legacy will forever inspire generations of women and girls to continue to fight for equality. To all the women listening I say: if you find yourself ordering a drink at the bar this weekend, raise a glass to Merle. She was a trailblazer whose courageous actions have left a mark on the history of women's rights in this country. Her unwavering dedication to the cause saw her establish the Equal Opportunities for Women Association, which helped deliver paid maternity leave, better childcare options and reform for women's rights in the Public Service. Premier, I think a statue outside the Regatta is a fitting tribute. Thanks for everything, Merle.