




Speech By
Jessica Pugh

MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; HEALTH,
ENVIRONMENT AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE, REPORT**

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (5.32 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the estimates reporting process with respect to the Health, Environment and Innovation Committee. At the outset, I extend my thanks to and express my sense of awe at the many departmental staff who I know worked long and hard on the preparation for the estimates process. Many public servants will publicly refer to it as a very gruelling process to prepare for—and rightly so, because it is the interrogation of the budget process and the budget papers. Therefore, it is only proper that both sides of the parliament and, of course, the crossbench put in substantial effort to prepare for the estimates process.

I think it is very appropriate to thank the doctors, nurses, allied health workers, paramedics, ambulance officers, the over 130,000 Queensland Health employees and all the other staff who contribute to carrying out Queensland Health's duties, which includes the pharmacists who do the free flu shots. I will return to that issue later. In this state we are very fortunate to have some of the very best clinicians available not just in the country; I think every member of the House would agree that we have some of the very best health staff in the world. I have been privileged to access that myself in recent years.

Unfortunately, some Queenslanders have been affected by the lack of hospital beds available for elective surgery in recent days, weeks and months. Media reports have widely canvassed that the surge in flu hospitalisations has led to the cancellation of elective surgeries in some hospitals. As the member for South Brisbane outlined during estimates, 86 per cent of patients who ended up in hospital were not vaccinated against the flu. When you consider that flu vaccinations are free and very widely available from a large number of sources, that is really sad and really shocking. Evidence tabled at the public hearing revealed shocking statistics that in Queensland flu vaccination rates are lower than the national average across every single age group, yet, as I said, flu vaccinations are widely available and are free to all Queenslanders aged over six months. However, people have to know about it in order to access it.

During the public hearing, we discovered that only \$675,000 was spent on promoting the flu vaccination program while almost three times that amount was spent by the government advertising its plans to build hospital infrastructure and recruit staff. While that is nice to know about, I think we can all agree that flu vaccinations save lives and it is absolutely imperative that every single Queenslanders knows about this really important program.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): Member for Mount Ommaney, I am sorry to interrupt you but the time for debate on the report has expired.