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**Coronavirus, Vaccination Mandate**

Mr KNUTH (Hill—KAP) (2.47 pm): I rise today to speak about the vaccine mandate introduced by this government in December last year. In my 18 years of parliament I never thought I would see another government segregation policy that again marginalises a section of our society. I highlight the scare campaign of this government. For months, the state government has been contradicting itself and shifting the goalposts. We were told that Queenslanders would be safe if fully vaccinated. Then they told us the virus was hunting down the unvaccinated. Then they told us the virus is now hunting down the unboosted. Now we have been told that a fourth shot may be required by the end of the year.

The mandate should never have been introduced. All it has achieved is isolation of the hospitality industry, health workers, teachers, the closing of business, putting people out of work and dividing families and friends.

I point out that every death, whether COVID related or not, is tragic; however, the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics information released last week puts it in perspective. Over the 22 months of COVID, 273,901 Australians died; however, of these deaths only 2,639 people were COVID related with 92 percent of these having three serious underlying conditions. Some 100,000 people died of cancer; 32,000 died of heart disease; 30,000 died of Alzheimer’s and dementia; and 10,000 died of diabetes. COVID related deaths represent fewer than one per cent of the total deaths in Australia over the past 22 months. The median age of COVID related deaths was 81 years for men and 86 years for women.

Both are above our national average life span. Far more people died from the flu than COVID. We had 2,639 COVID deaths over 22 months. However, over a period of 12 months in 2019, 4,124 people died of the flu. That is a far worse death toll. All this information can be found by anyone on the ABS website.

The vaccination mandate commenced in Queensland on 17 December 2021 when we had 2,227 cases and a fully vaccinated status of 83.6 per cent. Just over two months later COVID cases in the state had jumped to 532,273, with a fully vaccinated status of 90.6 per cent. Since the mandate started in Queensland, Queensland has averaged 8,031 new cases per day. During the same period, the number in the state who are unvaccinated has fallen from 16.4 per cent to 9.4 per cent, yet we have recorded 530,000 new cases.

My point is this: we have exiled the unvaccinated from society and restricted their movements yet COVID has rapidly spread throughout the state. Who is spreading the virus? It is very clear that the spread of the virus does not discriminate between those who are vaccinated and those who are not.

This data clearly shows that the mandate is a complete waste of time and has made zero difference to stopping the spread of COVID through the state. In fact, this government has worsened the state’s health response by standing down 4,000 of our highly trained health workers when the mandate was introduced. We have also lost specialised staff in aged care and home care services which has left many of our sick, elderly and disabled helpless.

A massive amount of resources has been wasted in policing businesses, cafes, pubs and takeaways to enforce a mandate that is unnecessary, highly destructive and ineffective. Instead of a mandate we should be focused on putting all our resources towards protecting and providing care to the sick, the frail, the disabled and the elderly. I call on the Premier to immediately end the mandate for all Queenslanders so we can get back to some form of normality and sanity.