




Speech By
Amy MacMahon

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

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MOTION

Coronavirus, Vaccination Mandate

 **Dr MacMAHON** (South Brisbane—Grn) (4.35 pm): The Greens support mandatory COVID vaccinations for healthcare workers. The member for Maiwar and I are fully vaccinated and we urge all Queenslanders to get vaccinated as soon as possible. However, the government does not need parliament's support or this motion to mandate this. This motion is designed to wedge the LNP and distract from the things the government should be doing but is not.

My office has had healthcare workers getting in touch about the dire state of our healthcare system: nurses worried about mental health and code yellows, doctors concerned about poor staff-to-patient ratios, paramedics concerned about understaffing and workers leaving the sector, workers saying things like, 'We cannot even handle the current workload that exists,' and, 'We do not have enough isolation rooms to even handle a small COVID exposure,' and, 'We have been asked to do even more with even less.' No matter how brightly they are presented in the Premier's Canva templates, Queensland's vaccination rates are sobering. It has been unnecessarily slow, which lies at the feet of both the federal and state governments.

A few months ago we had the government urging Queenslanders to get vaccinated even when there were limited appointments or places to do so. This has really changed in recent months. It has been amazing to see the government step up with big vaccination hubs and other dedicated measures to get Queenslanders vaccinated with thousands of people coming forward. I am worried about people who cannot just pop down to a vaccination hub or a GP. It is clear that people living with disability, who were knocked off the priority list, as well as First Nations folks have some of the lowest vaccination rates in our state. I have been speaking with organisations who advocate for them to get to the bottom of these issues and to start to look at how we ensure these Queenslanders are not left exposed when our state borders reopen.

Mandatory vaccination for healthcare workers is a no-brainer, but so is pulling out all stops to ensure our healthcare system is ready for the surges in case numbers and ICU admissions which the modelling tells us will come when Queensland reopens. Symbolic motions are not enough. We need funding. We have a Labor state government, and health should be its bread and butter. The modelling shows our healthcare system will be severely stretched, and the reason our hospital system is not prepared is 30 years of underfunding from successive Labor and LNP governments. This government still has an efficiency dividend in place on the hospital system, forcing workers to do more and more for less. Even today we have had the minister blame the federal government for our underfunded hospital system.

The state-federal blame game is the oldest story in the book. The government needs to widen its vision. Full vaccination rates are crucial and when Queenslanders go out and get vaccinated, the government needs to actually fund the hospital system to do its job.