



Speech By  
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**MEMBER FOR NOOSA**

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## **MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

### **Coronavirus, Vaccination**

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (2.26 pm): Thankfully, finally Noosa has both supply and choice in vaccinations. That comes after months when there were access issues, including for our aged-care workers who had a mandated vaccination date yet no locally available supply to meet their deadline. Noosa now has over 70 per cent first and 60 per cent second dose rates. However, with hints of borders reopening we have more work to do to avoid long queues and potential vaccine supply issues coming into Christmas. In addition, to avoid confusion for those seeking to reunite with loved ones interstate, we need consistency, clarity and assurances now and into the coming months.

Firstly, all states need to be consistent with the national cabinet determinations. We are one country and we need and want to do this together. Differences between states in vaccination rates, moving targets or inconsistent rationales for snap lockdowns deepens the despair of Queenslanders, creating further uncertainty when what they seek is confidence.

Secondly, governments need to understand vaccine hesitancy and the communities that are experiencing low vaccination percentages. That will not be addressed by broad campaigns, texts or the chance to win \$1 million. It will be addressed by simplifying and sharing what is in abundance from worldwide organisations, the TGA, our chief health officers and their 60 expert advisers, and translating that information in a culturally appropriate way, especially for our remote communities. A lack of trust has developed from misinterpretations and misrepresentations of data, deliberate misinformation, poor communications and a lack of response from governments to questions from constituents. As a member of parliament, when I have asked those questions on their behalf I was referred to various committee reports on the extension of emergency powers. Some answers were found there and others were found at various websites and in other reports, although not all. That was difficult and time consuming, and it should not have been. There were valid concerns, including about privacy and the Queensland app. At a recent hearing, the Queensland Information Commissioner indicated a need for legislative change and I trust the Attorney-General will act upon that. Then there is the big bugbear: ivermectin. Even though currently it is not approved by the TGA, trials are underway, including the Oxford principal trial that is expected to publish results in several months. Simply sharing that information with Queenslanders was all that was needed.

Thirdly, there is confusion regarding the legality of industry mandated vaccinations with neither federal nor state governments, nor national cabinet, clarifying the issues. Decisions such as the Fair Work Commission's two-to-one majority determination regarding the dismissal of an aged-care worker who refused to be vaccinated provide little clarity, with one commissioner diametrically opposed to the decision.

Providing reassurance and increasing trust must be a priority for all governments by addressing claims and providing responses on respective websites. The reality is that there will be some Queenslanders who will not or do not trust government or our medical advisers and, through their own

personal health choices, will refrain from vaccinating. However, there are those who are simply hesitant or complacent and require clarity around where we are heading, why and when. We should not be fearful of speaking about what living with COVID looks like and the associated challenges.

For Queenslanders to have trust in government, government needs to trust Queenslanders. They will make their informed decisions based on what the benefits are and when these will be realised. This encompasses the date our country will again be one, versus the trauma of closed borders and the quarantine exemptions debacles which are segmenting and debilitating Australians. As well, the risk that some of us will get sick and some, very sadly, will die, even if vaccinated, has been relayed.

We have shown enormous responsibility, commitment, resilience and determination over many months. We know that we now need to face this delta strain to get to herd immunity as quickly as possible through vaccination as well as natural immunity from virus contact. However, we must ensure that everyone has had opportunity to vaccinate. We need to bolster our health services and clarify the date or target into the next phase, not just hint at it. Why? Our frontliners, resources, businesses and community capacities are now fatigued beyond breaking point and need that confirmation to give strength for the coming weeks and months. This fatigue has become our greatest challenge, maybe even more so now than when this virus entered our world nearly two years ago.