




Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

Record of Proceedings, 2 December 2021

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Update

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (9.57 am): Yet again, COVID-19 has reared its head in our community. In news that will become increasingly common when we open to interstate hotspots, we have identified a new case which has been infectious in the community. This is a wake-up call to all of Queensland but most particularly the Gold Coast.

The case has been in infectious in that community for a number of days, including at the Black Friday sales in Robina. Genomic sequencing is underway, but the plenary advice is that this is likely to be a Delta case rather than a case of the new Omicron variant. However, our public health authorities are investigating whether this case is somehow linked to the previous cases we have seen in the Gold Coast recently or a new outbreak. Either way, it could indicate that we have had undetected community transmission in and around the Gold Coast for some time. The people of the Gold Coast need to protect themselves, their families and their communities as we head into the festive season. This can be done by getting tested when sick and coming forward for a vaccination if they are yet to receive one.

Our vaccination rate continues to increase at a very encouraging rate. The more vaccinations we administer to Queenslanders, the safer we will be. On that note, I want to extend a heartfelt thankyou to all of the Queenslanders who have played a role in keeping our community safe this year. I want to thank our Care Army volunteers. They have given up their time to make it easier for Queenslanders to navigate our vaccination process. I want to thank all the staff who have worked in our hotel quarantine facilities, the front line of preventing COVID-19 entering our community. It has been a difficult year.

I thank the clinical staff who have treated our COVID-positive patients and our broader health workforce for the great work they do every day. I thank Her Excellency the Hon. Dr Jeannette Young for her stewardship throughout 2021 as our chief health officer; Dr Peter Aitken and our deputy chief health officers; and the department, for their great work. I thank the exemptions team, who have had a really difficult job to do throughout 2021. I thank the Queensland government staff who have helped in answering the calls from Queenslanders through the 13HEALTH and 134COVID numbers. You have been vital in disseminating important information to an often anxious community. Indeed, our statistics show that there have been over 1.2 million phone calls relating to COVID-19 to our government hotlines.

Finally, I thank the amazing health staff who have worked at our testing and vaccination sites. On occasion, we have had to stand these clinics up at exceptionally short notice and for extended hours. There have been more than 4.9 million tests undertaken and 7.2 million doses of the vaccine administered. I thank each and every one of these staff. Each and every time these staff members have surpassed our expectations and gone above and beyond to protect our community.

In recent weeks, we have seen a concerning trend of abuse and harassment towards staff who are working at vaccination centres. On occasion, sadly, police have had to attend our clinics to de-escalate the situation. It creates danger when prominent figures spout anti-vaccination nonsense and perpetrate conspiracy. We all have a responsibility to ensure that our words are not endangering

the physical safety of others, so let's rise above that to support our health workers. A bit of patience, a smile and a thankyou can go a long way. In conclusion, I say to every Queenslander: this Christmas, give your health staff the gift of your kindness and get vaccinated for them.