




Speech By
Stephen Andrew

MEMBER FOR MIRANI

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ADJOURNMENT

Coronavirus, Vaccination Mandate

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—PHON) (6.19 pm): On 30 November last year, just 10 days before the school year ended, the Premier announced a mandate for all school and childcare centre employees. There was no warning, no prior consultation and not a single risk assessment done to justify such a policy. Workers who went to their union were turned away after a lifetime of membership fees. The QTU, I am told, even refused to help staff negotiate the terms of their suspension or termination.

Unions, however, were not the only ones guilty of breaching their duty of care to these workers. The education department's role has been just as reprehensible. Low-skilled or casual workers were simply terminated and sent packing. Many experienced and qualified teachers were dealt with the same way. The rest were suspended without pay until June 2022. That is six months with no income and forbidden from finding another job without the department's say-so. This is all while under threat from the department that if they speak out, they could face additional disciplinary action. Most teachers were in shock and traumatised by what had happened to them that going public was the last thing any of them wanted to do.

These mandates should never have been introduced. All over regional and remote Queensland classes are being combined—often across differing subject and year levels—principals, deputies and other administration staff are being called on to teach in classrooms again; teachers who remain are working at an unsustainable level, with many now routinely teaching classes outside their subject area; and university students are being installed across multiples schools to cover for qualified staff.

Then there is what is happening to teachers and other education staff who hold valid medical exemptions approved by Medicare. They were told, 'Regardless of your exemption status, the director-general of education's directive 01/21 still applies and you are not to enter a school or early childhood education high-risk setting.' These teachers were sent an authority to release medical information form and told to sign it. The authority allows the office of Organisational Safety and Wellbeing to review all relevant medical records and question their doctor. If they are not satisfied, the team could overrule the exemption. On at least one occasion this was done. These teachers have to wear a face mask at all times, undergo daily testing, are banned from certain events and functions, have to eat their lunch and morning tea alone and separate and have to stay at least five feet away from their co-workers and students at all times.

Before World War II no other group, apart from the Indigenous, were more despised or segregated than us, the Kanakas. The press depicted us as disease ridden and to be shunned. Many Kanakas were forcibly detained and interned in camps under the most appalling conditions. Segregation is wrong. Whether it is done in the name of health or race, it is wrong and dangerous. I call on the Premier to immediately end mandates for all Queenslanders and let the state return to work.