




Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Restrictions; Coronavirus, Vaccination

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (10.08 am): As the Premier announced this morning, from 4 March we can put our masks away. Thanks to the great work of Queenslanders in getting vaccinated, we have been able to withstand the worst of the Omicron wave. Of course, anyone who wants to wear a mask is welcome to do so. We encourage people to still keep a mask with them in case they find themselves not being able to socially distance or feel the need to wear a mask in crowded settings. Along with the other eased restrictions announced by the Premier, Queensland has some of the least onerous restrictions in the country and some of the best economic indicators thanks to vaccinations.

Today, 22 February, marks 12 months since the COVID-19 vaccination rollout began in Queensland. One year ago I accompanied then chief health officer Dr Jeannette Young and then head of infectious diseases at the Gold Coast University Hospital Dr John Gerrard to observe the very first vaccine being administered at the Gold Coast University Hospital to COVID-19 nurse Zoe Park. Since that historic occasion, our state clinics have administered millions upon millions of life-saving vaccine doses. Combined with the doses provided by primary care providers, more than 10 million doses have been administered in Queensland.

On 8 February 2022, Queensland reached the milestone of 90 per cent of the eligible population aged 16 and above being fully vaccinated. This means over four million Queenslanders are now vaccinated. This is an incredible achievement that many thought would not be possible at the start of the pandemic.

Undertaking the vaccine rollout in a state as decentralised and diverse as ours makes this achievement even greater. Our efforts have ensured that every Queenslander has had the opportunity to get vaccinated. This effort has involved thousands of staff and the work of all these people cannot be underestimated. I would like to express my thanks to all those who have worked on the vaccination rollout program from the vaccinators to the paramedics, pharmacists, security, floor managers, concierge and volunteers at our vaccination centres, as well as the operations and planning staff working behind the scenes.

Every death from COVID-19 is a tragedy and I express my sincere condolences to anyone who has lost a loved one to this virus. Without the high level of vaccination we now have in Queensland, thousands of Queenslanders would have suffered serious illness or died. The vaccine rollout is not over yet, and there is still work we need to do as COVID-19 continues to circulate. With the majority of the adult population now double vaccinated, our current focus is on getting more of the five- to 11-year-old cohort vaccinated, ensuring eligible Queenslanders get their booster shot and working to encourage more Queenslanders in low coverage areas to get vaccinated.

You are more likely to suffer serious illness or death without vaccination. It is not too late to get vaccinated. For the millions of Queenslanders who came forward to get vaccinated over the past 12 months we say thank you. Thank you for making it a priority for yourself, your family, your community and Queensland.