




Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Update

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (9.57 am): Last week the Chief Health Officer and I advised that Queensland was in the middle of its second Omicron wave. I can advise that in the past week the number of COVID patients in our public hospitals has risen from 271 to 365, with today's numbers being 339, including 24 children, and 15 people in ICU. The number of furloughed health workers has risen from 1,596 people on 20 March to 3,232 as at yesterday. I know that many in this chamber and people across Queensland are either experiencing COVID in their own households or know friends, families and work colleagues confronting this virus. This wave is now putting additional pressure back on our hospital system.

It was two days ago that the Morrison government had the opportunity to recognise not only the pressure COVID is having on our hospital and health systems across the country but also the need for real reform on funding for public hospitals as well as the primary healthcare sector into the future. They failed the people of Queensland. Instead of fronting up with much needed funding reform, they enacted senseless cuts to our hospitals. Not only has the coalition walked away from health reform; it is also walking away from the vital COVID national partnership agreement. This agreement has provided much needed funding to our health system as we have battled the Delta and Omicron variants. It ensures that we have proper fifty-fifty funding for COVID related hospital and public health activity. In the absence of the actual fifty-fifty funding, retaining a fifty-fifty split for COVID activity is a must.

Our most recent figures show that we are not yet done with COVID. We know that it will continue to put additional pressure on our already stretched hospital system, which is why it was so disheartening to see the significant cut from the Morrison government on this funding source. Whereas \$526.8 million was allocated by the coalition government for the COVID-19 national partnership agreement for 2021-22, that funding has been cut to \$105.8 million for 2022-23, with the federal government projecting that the funding agreement will end on 30 September this year. After that there is nothing—back to the undercooked funding model that has been condemned by every state and territory as well as pre-eminent stakeholders such as the AMA.

Living with COVID does not mean pretending COVID does not exist. Our new reality will always necessitate additional hospital capacity for the continued demand the virus will create. If the Commonwealth is not going to reform our flawed funding model, it needs to reverse its proposed COVID cuts. Queenslanders want their fair share and will not accept anything less.