



Speech By  
**Hon. Yvette D'Ath**


**MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE**

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Record of Proceedings, 25 May 2022

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Coronavirus, Update; Influenza, Vaccination

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (10.02 am): Today Queensland reaches a tragic milestone. I can advise the House that as of today we have now reached more than 1,000 COVID deaths. With 10 additional deaths reported overnight, the number of lives lost in Queensland through this awful virus stands at 1,008. These numbers are not just statistics, they are people. On behalf of all Queenslanders I extend our condolences to those who have lost loved ones to COVID-19. Nothing we can say will ever ease their pain.

While we mourn those who have passed, we must also be clear and proud of what we have all achieved together. The initial projections of the deaths we would see from the virus stood at 10,000. The projections of the curve that could have occurred without our public health interventions would have meant our hospital system would have been significantly overwhelmed, as we saw in so many countries around the world. To put this into perspective, right now as reported there have been over 526½ million cases and 6.28 million deaths globally. The pleasing statistic though is that 11.48 billion vaccinations globally have been administered to tackle COVID. Yet still, in the last 28 days, 15.8 million cases of COVID have been reported and there have been 56,647 deaths globally.

We know our success did not occur alone; it occurred because of the hard work of everyday Queenslanders. Queenslanders' efforts in following the health advice and staying safe meant that we were able to prevent mass circulation of the virus until we had been able to vaccinate the majority of our population. Our vaccination rate now stands at 93.87 per cent first dose and 92.3 per cent second dose for those 16-plus years and we are now at 91.04 per cent double dosed for 12-year-olds and above. This ensured that even as the virus spread throughout our community the vast majority of us had significant protection against serious illness arising from infection.

While we have passed through the worst of the first Omicron wave, our hospitals continue to deal with record demand and the threat of COVID-19 is still with us. That is why I remind Queenslanders that our booster rates currently are at 62.9 per cent and our five- to 11-year-old vaccination rates are 43.51 per cent. Queenslanders who are yet to do so should ensure that they get their COVID vaccination and also their booster dose of the COVID vaccine. Those who are entitled to a fourth dose should get theirs as soon as they are eligible.

I also want to update the House on how the COVID-19 virus will impact this year's influenza A outbreak. I am advised that our clinicians are seeing people presenting to our hospitals with a co-infection of COVID-19 and influenza. These cases can be particularly acute. I understand we have two people suffering from co-infection currently in critical condition in our ICUs. The best way to protect against this critical infection is to ensure you are protected against both viruses. With both vaccines now being free, there is no reason for people to delay getting vaccinated. Our decision to subsidise the flu vaccine has already seen a significant increase in demand. This demonstrates that cost was proving a prohibitive factor to Queenslanders who wanted to protect themselves.

While there have been some reports of delays in communications reaching some of our GPs and pharmacies across our large decentralised state, there has been and will continue to be communications going out from peak medical and pharmacy groups to provide further information.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Ms Grace:** I think they stood beside you.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I take that interjection. The AMA Queensland and the Pharmacy Guild stood with us. On Tuesday Queensland Health met with GP Alliance to answer any outstanding questions and provide certainty about how this initiative will work. All providers can be assured that they will be reimbursed by the state government for any flu vaccine they administer between now and 30 June. I ask the public to be respectful to our GPs, pharmacists and their staff who are working collaboratively to deliver this free vaccine. I thank the health professionals for their willingness to make this rollout a success. It was important that we moved quickly, with a doubling of cases every week. Every day counts and we need people to get vaccinated as soon as possible.