




Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

Record of Proceedings, 1 September 2022

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Update

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (10.31 am): As we announced recently, the peak of the most recent wave of COVID occurred in late July. During the peak of the wave on 26 July there were 1,123 people in hospitals across Queensland with COVID-19, there were 66,569 active cases reported on that day, with multiple ambulance callouts related to COVID-19. On 26 July we had 2,404 Queensland Health staff off work with COVID-19. Between then and now there has been a significant decrease in all of these indicators. Hospitalisation numbers have dropped dramatically in the weeks since 26 July and currently sit at less than 350.

National modelling suggested we would not experience the worst of the wave until late August, but clearly that did not eventuate. I am very grateful and thankful to Queenslanders for once again listening to the health advice and doing the right thing. For example, more than 831,000 Queenslanders over the age of 65 have had their fourth-dose booster. That number rose substantially leading up to the peak. More people with COVID-19 also sought antiviral medicines. Between 20 June and 24 July prescriptions rose from 800 a week to 6,467 a week. That is an increase of over 800 per cent.

Our Chief Health Officer, Dr John Gerrard, warned recently that a fourth wave in December is possible. However, it is clear that we are in a new stage of the pandemic. Given that we will be living with this virus for years to come, we need to transition away from managing via Chief Health Officer public health directions unless it is absolutely necessary. In light of this, the Chief Health Officer has advised me that he intends to revoke elements of the Workers in Health Care Setting (COVID-19 Vaccination Requirements) Direction.

As of tomorrow, the mandated COVID-19 vaccination requirements for workers in private healthcare settings will be removed. This will impact workers in both private hospitals, as well as workers in primary care settings like GP clinics. Whether vaccination is required for these individuals is now a matter for individual employers as part of normal workplace health and safety obligations. I am advised that the majority of private hospital providers have already put in place vaccination requirements for their workforce rather than relying on public health directions. This revocation will not impact Queensland Health facilities which are already governed through employment arrangements, nor will it impact workers in private aged-care facilities or disability accommodation services where the mandate is retained.

I also note the changes to isolation and mask wearing on flights announced by National Cabinet which reflect the changing approach to managing the pandemic across the country. This changing environment is recognised here in Queensland. I can advise the House that today I will be introducing a bill that will adjust Queensland's pandemic management approach post 31 October. While our methods of managing the pandemic will change, the message remains the same: vaccinations save lives. I encourage any Queenslanders who has not yet had their booster shot to go and get it as soon as possible. Together we can keep ourselves, our families and our communities safe.

I can also inform the House that with the peak of the third wave having passed, from this week Queensland Health will report COVID case numbers daily from Monday to Friday, with no reporting on weekends. As we continue to transition to living with COVID, we will continue to ensure that our decisions are guided by the best health advice.