




Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

Record of Proceedings, 27 October 2022

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Update

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (9.50 am): Yesterday our parliament passed our new COVID management framework. This new framework allows Queensland to adjust its approach to the management of COVID-19 to reflect the new reality we are all living with. This means that on 31 October a significant milestone will be reached in our COVID-19 journey: the public health emergency declaration that we have relied on for 1,006 days will cease.

When that declaration was first made on 29 January 2020 the world was still coming to terms with this strange virus emanating from Wuhan, China. The modelling at that time suggested that more than 10,000 Queenslanders would lose their lives if there was widespread community transmission before vaccination, but that did not happen. Thanks to the collective efforts of Queenslanders, we did not let the virus run rampant. We contained it. Queensland led the world.

We were able to live with a semblance of normality throughout the pandemic that very few other communities had. However, we must acknowledge that even during that period we lost seven lives. Since reaching our vaccination targets and opening our borders we have lost 2,277 lives. I want to acknowledge the grief associated with each and every life lost. I know that grief is shared by our health staff. Our hearts go out to all of the bereaved families and friends who have lost a loved one to COVID. This grief extends to the many thousands of health workers whose lives have been lost around the world treating COVID patients. They make up part of the 6.5 million lives lost to COVID so far.

It is now very clear that we are in a different stage of the pandemic. At our peak, there were 1,123 beds in our public hospitals occupied by COVID patients in Queensland. Today that figure stands at 92 in our public hospitals. At its highest, there were 54 COVID patients in our ICUs. Today that figure sits at three, but that does not tell the full story. Here are just some of the extraordinary facts about Queensland's management of this virus.

We have conducted more than 8.6 million PCR tests. We have administered more than 12 million vaccinations. A total of 925 vaccination locations were stood up. This is an extraordinary figure. We have had more than 132,749 bed days occupied by COVID-19 patients since 13 December last year. That is only since 13 December last year. I repeat: over 132,000 bed days lost.

We have had more than 346,000 staff days lost to isolation and quarantine just since March this year. That is almost three times our total staffing population across the public health system—just since March this year. There have been 493 public health directions issued and 1.5 million calls to 13HEALTH and 134COVID. More than 251,000 businesses registered for the check-in app and there were more than one billion check-ins with the check-in app. In fact, there were 1.06 billion check-ins.

Behind these facts there are the people who made our COVID response as successful as it has been. I speak of such people as our chief health officers. There was Her Excellency Dr Jeannette Young. We will be forever grateful for her leadership and guidance, her willingness to give guidance to the government to be the first jurisdiction—

An opposition member interjected.

Mrs D'ATH: I find it extraordinary that those on the opposite side will interject. There was Her Excellency Dr Jeannette Young and Dr John Gerrard. We thank him for his guidance through that difficult time of opening our borders and dealing with that virus spreading throughout our community. There were our Queensland Health staff, from the doctors and nurses to the wardies and cooks. I give a shout-out to the cleaners and the BEMS team because they stood up and did an incredible job in infection control and setting up temporary isolation wards and ICU COVID wards so quickly when we needed it. We could not have done it without them. There were also our paramedics and the QAS staff—

Ms Grace: And in our schools, too.

Mrs D'ATH: I am getting to them. There were also our paramedics and the QAS staff—their fears every time they went to a home not knowing whether they were going to transmit COVID back home to their families and the support they gave to everyone in hotel quarantine. There were our private health providers, who partnered with us, our GPs and our pharmacists; we say thank you. There were our First Nations health workers and the Aboriginal and community controlled health organisations, the students in medicine and nursing who put their hands to the wheel during our vaccination efforts, our CALD community leaders and our religious leaders, our community organisation leaders and professional sporting clubs.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Kawana will cease his interjections.

Mrs D'ATH: There were also all of the government agencies, who made such a difference. I make special mention of the Queensland Police Service. For the work they did on hotel quarantine and our borders we say thank you. To our education staff—we know it is so difficult for our teachers and for the families; to housing and to justice and attorney-general; to every agency that stepped in and stepped up to make sure we supported the community; to the Queensland Health SHECC team—they will have been operating for 1,010 days once this declaration lifts. To the Deputy Premier as the former health minister I say thank you for your guidance in those early days and for the work you have done. Last but not least, I say thank you to the Premier, who led Queenslanders tirelessly and fearlessly, who withstood abuse and stuck to her guns, who took the health advice, who did the right thing no matter how difficult the decisions. Queenslanders are safer, healthier and more prosperous thanks to her. She was the person who withstood calls 64 times to open the borders. We say thank you, Premier.

The enormity of this undertaking is still something that I do not think any of us can fully appreciate, but we know that the actions of every Queensland—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, members to my left, there are too many general interjections. I do not believe that the minister is being provocative in any way with the statement being made.

Mrs D'ATH: I think we should show respect at this time in reflecting on what we have achieved over 2½ years. We can know that the actions of every Queensland have meant that we have been able to weather the impact of this virus better than almost any other place in the world. For that, Queensland should be very proud. We say thank you.