



Hon Yvette D'Ath MP
Minister for Health and Ambulance Services
Leader of the House

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Mr Neil Laurie
Clerk of the Parliament
Queensland Parliament
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I write in response to your letter regarding petition number 3647-21, tabled in Parliament on 2 December 2021, in relation to the public health and safety measures that came into effect on 17 December 2021.

Queensland's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been successful to date. Large scale outbreaks in Queensland have been prevented with a rapid and decisive public health response. Public health and safety measures such as border restrictions and quarantine requirements, mask wearing and density requirements have been a key part of this response. However, such large-scale measures could not be maintained indefinitely.

Vaccination with TGA-approved COVID-19 vaccines offers proven and safe protection against COVID-19. Vaccination is the best protection against infections, moderate to severe COVID-19 illness, and onwards transmission, protecting the vaccinated individual and the broader community.

While vaccinated people can still be infected and transmit the virus, the higher risks associated with unvaccinated people are well documented. Unvaccinated people are far more likely to catch COVID-19, more likely to transmit it to others, and are more likely to require hospitalisation.

As vaccination coverage increases across Australia, all jurisdictions are now transitioning from a focus on eliminating COVID-19 to living with it. Under *Queensland's COVID-19 Vaccine Plan To Unite Families*, released on 18 October 2021, Queensland's border restrictions and quarantine requirements will be progressively eased as the Queensland population aged 16 and over nears or meets vaccine coverage milestones of 70 per cent (achieved on 19 November), 80 per cent (13 December) and 90 per cent (currently no set date). As Queensland's borders reopen, COVID-19 will start circulating widely in the Queensland community.

To ensure that the impacts of widespread circulation are minimised, on 9 November 2021 the Queensland Government released its *Public Health and Social Measures linked to Vaccination Status: A Plan for 80% and Beyond* (the Plan). The Plan sets out measures applying to vaccinated and unvaccinated people aged 16 years and over.

As noted in the petition, under the Plan, from 17 December there are no COVID-19 density restrictions on pubs, clubs, cafés, cinemas, theatres and music festivals, and all staff and attendees are to be fully vaccinated. These measures are designed to protect staff, customers, and visitors and also reduce COVID-19 seeding events and hence the need for lockdowns.

The measures also apply to vulnerable facilities including residential aged care, disability care accommodation and prisons to protect the health and wellbeing of residents and clients of these facilities, who remain among the most vulnerable to morbidity and mortality from COVID-19. Applying public health controls to the operations of vulnerable facilities minimises the risk of COVID-19 transmission to this cohort.

High vaccination coverage will be a key determinant going forward of health outcomes for all Queenslanders, the impact of COVID-19 cases upon our hospital system and the impact of COVID-19 on ongoing operations of businesses and public facilities – and community life in general. The more vaccinated we are, the lower any adverse impacts will be.

I note that the petition refers to 'Australian values and individual freedoms'. The decision to get vaccinated may be a personal one, but it has consequences for the entire community. Nothing in the Plan affects an individual's right to choose whether to get vaccinated. However, the Queensland Government has a responsibility to protect the community from both the direct impacts of COVID-19 and from the impacts of a surge of COVID-19 cases on the capacity of the health system.

I would encourage the petitioners to consider the benefits that COVID-19 vaccination has for both themselves and for others.

I trust this information is of assistance to the petitioners.

Yours sincerely



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