



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

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14 April 2022

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

14 APR 2022

Dear Mr Laurie

I write in response to your letter regarding petition number 3692-22, tabled in Parliament on 15 March 2022, in relation to Queensland's Public Health and Social Measures linked to Vaccination Status.

At the outset, I would condemn the appalling and offensive comparison of Queensland's vaccination mandate to the actions of Nazi Germany. To do so deminishes the horrors committed in the name of Nazism and betrays the memories who lost their lives during the Holocaust.

Rather than being a threat to liberty, the COVID-19 vaccination enhances our liberty. It provides individuals with ability to avoid a serious and life threatening illness – one that has already taken more than six million lives globally.

I note that thanks to the work of the Queensland community, we now have exceptionally high vaccination rates and have passed the peak of transmission arising from Queensland's second Omicron wave. This means the Chief Health Officer is now in a position to remove the vaccination requirements associated with the Public Health and Social Measures Public Health Direction as of 14 April 2022.

Queensland has had a very successful pandemic response, with community members enjoying higher levels of freedoms than most jurisdictions in Australia. Our flexible response and tailored COVID-19 public health measures and restrictions have protected Queenslanders from the significant public health, social and economic risks associated with large COVID-19 outbreaks.

Queensland's high vaccination coverage, along with the community's compliance with public health measures, has been key to our success in managing the recent widespread community transmission of the Omicron variant of COVID-19.

Throughout the pandemic, Queensland's public health measures are continually reviewed in the context of whether the benefits they provide sufficiently outweigh the social and economic costs they may create, particularly where alternatives may exist.

Under Queensland's current requirements, both vaccinated and unvaccinated people are able to access essential services and activities. This means unvaccinated people are still able to go to grocery stores, pharmacies, post offices, newsagents and clothing stores, and participate in activities like going to the gym for exercise.

Vaccination is mandatory for staff and visitors at high-risk vulnerable settings where there is the greatest risk of transmission and adverse outcomes. This includes hospitals, residential aged care facilities and disability accommodation services. Vaccination mandates are also in place for a number of key workforces, including our health workforce.

The use of the Check In Qld App has allowed visitors attending these venues to easily demonstrate compliance with mandatory vaccination requirements.

These measures help to provide a baseline level of protection against the risk of COVID-19 transmission and infection among staff and visitors, minimising the impact of COVID-19 on essential services and our hospital system – and community life in general.

Vaccination coverage in these settings is essential as we move toward an environment where we are managing a level of ongoing COVID-19 transmission in the community while at the same time being ready for any future waves and variants of concern.

High vaccination coverage remains a key determinant of positive health outcomes for all Queenslanders. COVID-19 vaccines are a proven, safe and effective means of reducing both the risk of infection and transmission.

I note the petitioners have raised concerns about discrimination of a specific group of people being restricted access to employment, services and businesses, "based on who they were".

Queensland has long-standing laws to protect against discrimination. Queensland's *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* prohibits discrimination on a range of attributes, including age, race, sex, relationship status, impairment, and sexuality. It is important to note that not all treatment that seems unfair is unlawful discrimination under that Act. There is a wide range of information specifically about discrimination, human rights and COVID-19 available on the Queensland Human Rights Commission website www.qhrc.qld.gov.au.

While some members of the community may consider Queensland's requirements divisive, it is important to remember that the vast majority of eligible Queenslanders have come forward already to be vaccinated against COVID-19. In addition, 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 trust this information is of assistance to the petitioners.

Yours sincerely



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