

MEDIA RELEASE
14 OCTOBER 2021

DOCTORS CALL FOR STATE ROADMAP OUT OF COVID

Queensland medical leaders have called for certainty about the State Government's plan to manage reopening borders as the nation moves to more freedom.

"While the Premier and Health Minister have hinted at timetables for reopening, it is time that Queenslanders have clarity on the vaccination rates that will allow the reopening of interstate borders," AMA Queensland President Professor Chris Perry said today.

"Queenslanders need to know what consequences they will face if they are not vaccinated in terms of their employment and their freedom of movement.

"They also need to understand the benefits of being vaccinated - which is fundamentally about protecting their health and that of their loved ones, but what else does it represent?

"Queenslanders have a right to know if being fully vaccinated will allow them to plan for Christmas - be that for business, holidays or reunions with family and friends across state borders."

AMA Queensland has been calling for the State Government to make vaccinations mandatory and accessible for all workers in health care facilities, not just Queensland Health hospitals and public health sites.

"All health facilities need a health order backing the mandate to vaccinate staff," AMA Queensland Council of General Practice chair Dr Maria Boulton said.

"It's such a grey area for GPs, other specialists and private practices and we need strong leadership and support so we can continue to care for our community and staff. We need clear industrial laws and health orders that support the mandate of vaccines in workplaces."

AMA Queensland remains concerned that Queensland's vaccination rates are lagging behind the national rate.

"We know that there have been issues with vaccine supply, but these have now largely been resolved," Prof Perry said.

"While we welcome all efforts to get Queenslanders vaccinated, we need to go beyond Bunnings to drive the uptake of vaccination rates in Queensland.

"We must clearly identify where help is needed so we are getting vaccines to our most vulnerable Queenslanders – those in our regional areas and Indigenous communities."

Dr Boulton said more work is needed to support GPs to play their part in keeping hospital intensive care units freed up for the most critical patients, as highlighted by the New South Wales and Victoria experiences.

"Other states are using programs like Hospital in the Home, where GPs provide telehealth consults to COVID patients who would otherwise be taking up hospital beds," Dr Boulton said.

“These programs need preparation and legal certainty for the doctors who take part, and we need this implementation happening now if they are going to be part of the Queensland plan.

“Let’s get accreditations and plans sorted before we are in crisis and make sure that GPs taking part have access to appropriate support and resources to care for COVID-positive patients, including personal protective equipment and indemnity.

“We saw how long it took the Federal Government to finalise the COVID vaccine no-fault compensation scheme, so the Queensland Government must address this now.”

Prof Perry said Queensland hospitals are already stretched with emergency departments under stress and hospitals running at 105 per cent capacity without any COVID cases.

“We must be ready for the COVID surge. We have enough ventilators, but do we have enough staff trained in managing ventilated patients,” Prof Perry said.

“Our members are also saying there are significant barriers for interstate health professionals to move to Queensland, so that must be simplified and addressed so our medical workforce can be bolstered.

“We urgently need the Queensland Government to release its roadmap with clear guidance on how we prepare our health system, medical workforce, community and business for reopening.”

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