

CORONAVIRUS — VACCINATIONS — BORDER RESTRICTIONS

497. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the Premier's public comment that he will not be opening the borders until April, after vaccination rates reach between 80 and 90 per cent. Given the imprecise, ambiguous and unscientific definition of "between 80 and 90 per cent", can the minister confirm that decisions are no longer being based on well-defined health advice; rather, they are now based on political decisions, because the Western Australian health system is still not prepared, even after 18 months, for a COVID-19 outbreak?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I thank the member for the question, because it allows me the opportunity to remind the chamber once again that the McGowan government has kept Western Australians safe.

Ms L. Mettam: Not if they want to go to an emergency department.

Mr R.H. COOK: Member, the McGowan government has kept people safe, and, as a result of that, they voted at the last election to reduce you to a rump of two! That is the endorsement by the WA people, who value the leadership provided by Premier McGowan in ensuring that we continue to keep Western Australians safe, keep our economy strong and make sure that we are creating the jobs of the future.

It is not surprising to hear that the Premier is now saying that he wants to keep people safe. He does not want to make a decision that will lead to illness, severe illness and potentially death. I think it is a fairly reasonable proposition that we do not want Western Australians to die unnecessarily.

Ms M.J. Davies: We'd like a health system that actually works.

Mr R.H. COOK: The member will have the opportunity to ask after this about the health system, which has also kept us safe.

Several members interjected.

Mr R.H. COOK: The Premier and all the Premiers of this country are utilising public health social measures to ensure that they keep their communities safe. That goes to the issue around the two-square-metre rule, which we do not have in Western Australia. It goes to the issue of mask wearing, which we do not have in Western Australia. It goes to the issue of ensuring that we keep out the disease, which we do not have in Western Australia. Our borders have been an important part of keeping people safe and keeping our economy strong. So, it is not surprising to hear the Premier say that that is the way he wants to make it. The borders are an integral part of our public health social measures around keeping us strong. We continue to seek and receive advice from the Chief Health Officer about what level of vaccination will allow us to rely less upon the public health social measures and more upon the impact of vaccination. But let us not hang onto glib numbers in the same way the Prime Minister does. There is no point having 80 per cent of people here vaccinated if 90 per cent of the Aboriginal community is not vaccinated, because that will lead to chronic disease and death, as sure as night follows day.

There is no certainty about the future. The only certainty we can have is that the Delta variant will be part of our lives. The only certainty we have today is that vaccination is the key to allowing us to get out of the COVID-19 pandemic experience. That is what we as a community should be focused on. Do not worry about what is going to happen in the future. The future will take care of itself once we become vaccinated. What we should be doing now—because now is the only thing we do have certainty over—is vaccination. Once we get a comprehensive spread of vaccination and immunisation in our community, we can consider opening up further.