

CORONAVIRUS — MANDATORY VACCINATION POLICY

**627. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Premier:**

I refer to the announcement that the Premier has just been outlining in relation to the government's mandatory COVID-19 policy for Western Australia's workforce. Given the government is now using a big-stick approach to get our vaccination rate up because the government has failed using other methods, when can we expect to see a road map that outlines a time line for safely reopening our borders?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

They never stop criticising our approach to dealing with COVID, and that has occurred over the course of the last two years. It has been a highly stressful and difficult period, yet the Liberals and Nationals in Western Australia never stop whining and whingeing and criticising. At the height of the pandemic last year, whilst we were trying to keep Western Australia safe, they were demanding that we allow COVID into WA, and they joined Clive Palmer in his efforts in the High Court. That is what the Liberal Party did. Ever since then, they have continued to attack and criticise.

Our vaccination rate is, basically, the same as Queensland's and ahead of the Northern Territory's and maybe a couple of percentage points behind South Australia's. They are comparable jurisdictions to Western Australia in that they are large states with relatively small populations and extended over a large area. We are all COVID-free. Naturally, we are not going to be vaccinated as quickly as New South Wales and Victoria, which got millions of extra doses per capita months before the rest of us. The idea is that somehow we should have the same vaccination rate when New South Wales got millions of extra doses of Pfizer early, on a number of occasions; and it had a massive outbreak, which obviously drove vaccination rates; and the rules were changed in New South Wales to allow quicker dosage between the two doses, but all those things have added up to New South Wales being vaccinated quicker than the rest of us. That is understandable. I do not understand why the Liberals and Nationals cannot understand that simple fact.

Some of Western Australia's issues involve remote Aboriginal communities, which are the commonwealth's responsibility. The vaccination rates there are very low. The commonwealth took on that responsibility. We want to help them. I understand why it is difficult. I am not attacking the commonwealth over it. I am making the point it is more difficult to do that. We will continue to put in place innovative measures to deal with the situation. I am advised that there are lines to get vaccinated at the shopping centres in Mirrabooka and Armadale. We have a hundred or so clinics around regional WA and we are going to put in place some extremely innovative measures to get more and more people vaccinated. But, by the end of this week, 60 per cent of over-12 Western Australians will have had both doses—and we are counting the 12 to 16-year-olds that the other states are not counting because I think they count. Our kids count. They should not be excluded from the measures. It makes it easier for New South Wales and Victoria to say that they got to higher level when they do not count kids. We are counting kids. It never made sense to me that kids were not counted.

There will be lots of innovation, but today's announcement is a tough decision, a hard decision, really quite an unusual decision, but it is something that we have had to do. I just remind everyone when you are at school, you get vaccinated. When you are a baby, you get vaccinated. This is what happens in our society and it has happened for decades to prevent terrible illnesses afflicting us throughout the course of our lives. When people work in aged care and hospitals, they are required to have a flu vaccine. This is not an unusual thing compared with that. I urge everyone across the state who is unhappy about vaccinations to think about it in that context. We have been doing it with children for decades, probably the best part of 100 years, and it has prevented millions of deaths.