

*REVIEW OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S COVID-19 MANAGEMENT AND RESPONSE*

**481. Dr J. KRISHNAN to the Premier:**

I refer to the independent *Review of Western Australia's COVID-19 management and response*, which was released yesterday. Can the Premier advise the house how the review has acknowledged Western Australia's strong response to the pandemic, while also providing advice to allow WA to prepare for potential pandemics in the future?

**Mr R.H. COOK replied:**

I thank the member for the question. He, above all people in this place, understands the important role that medical science plays in the health of our community. The *Review of WA's COVID-19 management and response* was tabled yesterday, and I would like to thank the independent reviewers: Hon John Day; Emeritus Professor Margaret Sears, AO; and Dr Michael Schaper—as members all know, three very eminent and well-qualified individuals. This is the first whole-of-government review of the COVID pandemic management and response in Australia, and WA is the first government in the nation to commission a complete review of this nature, providing a guide for future governments on how to handle future pandemics.

This is the important point: we want to provide a guidebook, a blueprint, for future governments that will inevitably confront another pandemic. The experts tell us that that is likely to be within our lifetimes, so it is important that we learn the lessons from this particular experience—an experience that, at that point in time, no living person had confronted. The reviewers engaged extensively with a range of stakeholders: members of the public, government agencies and community and industry groups. They also assessed a range of economic, social and health indicators relating to WA. With 35 recommendations, the review gives WA a blueprint to prepare for pandemics in the future. It also outlines the strength of WA's collective response to and management of COVID. WA schools remained open throughout the pandemic, allowing students to learn in person. Our economy continued to grow, across all sectors and above other states. Most significantly and most importantly, WA had the best health outcomes in the nation. Our fatality rate was just 0.074 per cent—the lowest of all states and territories. That is a fantastic achievement by the people of Western Australia. This was, in part, thanks to WA's exceptionally high vaccination rate, with our third-dose vaccination rate 10 per cent above the national average. Our two-dose vaccination rate was more than 95 per cent. However, alarmingly, since COVID-19 there has been some vaccine fatigue, fed by an increase in vaccine disinformation. This has seen a corresponding decline in the rate of some vaccinations in the community. For example, since 2019, the percentage of children under the age of 12 who have had flu vaccinations has halved. Members will know that this has been a bad flu season, and we are still experiencing it. Ninety-five per cent of all kids who have been hospitalised were unvaccinated; the numbers do not lie. That is incredibly telling. It is just so important that we continue to make sure that people understand that vaccinations work. They prevent severe illness and they save lives. That is why the government is taking immediate action. As recommended by the review, we will develop a public education campaign to combat misinformation and encourage vaccination uptake.

As I said, Hon John Day was one of the reviewers. Members will know John Day; he was an eminent member of this chamber, was twice Minister for Health and, indeed, holds a Bachelor of Science and a Bachelor of Dental Science. I think he has earned everyone's respect in this chamber. He said yesterday —

... it is pleasing to see that the Government is focusing on having a vaccination public health campaign to encourage further uptake. I think there has been a degree of complacency in the community to some extent ...

I think they are very true words, and it is very important that we take notice of them. He understands health and how governments work, but the Liberal Party today is not the Liberal Party we used to know. It is not the Liberal Party of esteemed scholars and ministers like John Day. Today it is controlled by other people—people like Hon Nick Goiran. We saw the sorts of people who Hon Nick Goiran and his friend Hon Peter Collier elevated as candidates at the last election. We saw the amazingly extreme views that came out day in, day out from those people, and we know that their views are working to spread division and fear in the community and misinformation when it comes to vaccines. They are science deniers. It is important that we get on top of these conspiracy theorists and people who spread misinformation. It is important for the Liberal Party to divorce itself from these sorts of extreme views and these people who have taken hold of the party. They are the same people today who control the Liberal Party. They are the same people who the member for Vasse depends upon for her leadership. They are the same people who bragged that they were “The Clan” and that they were running the show. They are still there, members. The member for Vasse needs to act. The member for Vasse needs to join the government in attacking these people who spread fear, misinformation and division in the community about vaccines. Yesterday, we heard from the member for Vasse. Like all the other recent past Liberal leaders, she goes about undermining the state government's efforts to keep people safe. Yesterday, she said that the review was not forensic and that it looked only at what worked well.

**Ms L. Mettam:** It is in the report.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** The member trashed the work of the independent reviewers. In contrast, let me quote Hon John Day, who said —

We weren't concerned with the politics of the situation, but we were concerned with what we were told and the empirical evidence that we were given. And the statistics indicate that there was a lower rate of fatalities in Western Australia and a lower incidence of the disease. So overall, things did work well.

The member for Vasse would do well to learn the lessons of her predecessors. I refer to those Liberal leaders who, like her, sought to undermine the Western Australian community's confidence in the measures that kept Western Australians safe, and those leaders who went into bat for Clive Palmer and tried to tear down our borders. We are talking about the former member for Cottesloe, Zak Kirkup, Liza Harvey —

*Point of Order*

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** The Premier was asked a question about vaccines. He is now talking about former Liberal leaders. I cannot understand the relevance and it has been going for some time. It is question time.

**The SPEAKER:** Premier, I will remind you that we have other questions to get to.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

**Mr R.H. COOK:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am just reminding people how much the Liberal Party has divorced itself from "The Clan". Hon Nick Goiran, with his little protégé, Peter Hudson, was out on the hustings in Rockingham. Members opposite have not learnt anything. This Leader of the Liberal Party will go the same way as the others if she continues in this vein.