

CORONAVIRUS — INTERSTATE BORDER RESTRICTIONS

76. Hon WILSON TUCKER to the Leader of the House representing the Premier:

In response to the media questions about the delayed border reopening, the Premier is quoted as having said that by delaying by months we saved scores, if not hundreds, of lives.

- (1) Was this assessment provided to the Premier or did he make it up himself?
- (2) What data was his assessment based on?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1)–(2) If Western Australia proceeded on the original transition plan, which was developed for the Delta variant, Western Australia’s border would have opened in full at the height of the east coast outbreak with low third-dose vaccination rates and low vaccination rates among children. This would have resulted in hundreds or thousands of cases entering the Western Australian community at once, which would have spread significantly when WA’s third dose vaccination rate was much lower. On 20 January, when the decision was made to delay the full border opening, Western Australia’s third dose rate was about 25 per cent. We expect that the rate will now reach 70 per cent on or around 3 March when Western Australia’s border will now open. As the Chief Health Officer has explained in his health advice dated 18 February 2022, the double dose vaccine effectiveness against hospitalisation with Omicron falls to about 52 per cent. In his advice, the Chief Health Officer goes on to explain that the third dose increases vaccine effectiveness against hospitalisation to 88 per cent. This clearly shows how giving Western Australians more time and opportunity to get their third dose, unlike other jurisdictions, means that hospitalisations will be significantly lower compared with opening borders when third-dose rates are much lower. By the nature of COVID-19 and the Omicron variant, particularly amongst older Western Australians, this has saved hundreds of lives. It is also expected that by 3 March, 65 per cent of children aged between five and 11 will have received their first dose. This puts Western Australia in a strong position and allows for the safest transition possible.