



## Media release

### JOINT STATEMENT

#### Premier and Minister for the Olympics

The Honourable Annastacia Palaszczuk

#### Minister for Health and Ambulance Services

The Honourable Yvette D'Ath

## Free Flu Jab for Every Queenslander

All Queenslanders will be offered a free flu vaccination as the State faces a severe outbreak of Influenza A.

COVID-19 measures had reduced flu cases to almost nil since 2020 but more than 4,000 cases have already been reported in 2022.

Cases in Queensland are doubling every week increasing from 1,848 to 4,282 in the past week.

Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk said she had taken the unprecedented decision to protect Queenslanders because:

- Influenza A is predominantly a virus impacting young and old age groups more than others
- Vaccine rates and immunity levels are low
- Case numbers are climbing faster and earlier than expected

Most importantly all of the impacts of COVID-19 including absenteeism, interruptions to supply chains and health services will be duplicated and exacerbated by a simultaneous outbreak of Influenza A.

"We have seen how difficult it has been to fight COVID-19," the Premier said.

"To fight COVID-19 and the flu is doubly hard.

"That's why we are making these flu shots free for everyone."

Acting Chief Health Officer Dr Peter Aitken said time is of the essence.

"Influenza A is more severe than Influenza B," Dr Aitken said.

"It leads to greater numbers needing to go to hospital.

“Vaccination rates for children 6 months to less than 5 years of age is just 6%.

“I urge parents of all age groups to please take up this offer of a free vaccine.”

Health Minister Yvette D’Ath said the free vaccines will be available for all Queenslanders aged six months and older.

“Flu vaccines are generally not free except for the most vulnerable,” the Minister said.

“Our 2017 season saw more than 750 people in intensive care and our 2019 season saw about 300 people

“The fact that more than 4,000 cases have already been detected when flu seasons don’t usually begin until late July is very concerning.

“Our best defence is to get as many people vaccinated as possible.”

The Minister also thanked the professional pharmacy and medical bodies for backing this initiative and asked all Queenslanders to be patient and kind to the healthcare providers as this initiative is rolled out across the state.

The vaccines will be available free from GPs and pharmacies from now until the end of June.

All Queenslanders should speak with their local GP or pharmacist to see which vaccine is available to them.

There are no changes for people already eligible under the National Immunisation program. People eligible under the National Immunisation Program should continue to access influenza vaccine from their usual vaccination providers.

For more information go to the Queensland Health website.

**ENDS**

**Media contact:** Martin Philip, 0407 675 008

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