

13 December 2023

Local school kept unvaccinated staff employed despite Chief Health Officers advice. No one died and the school ran as per usual.

In order for the Commonwealth Government to improve its response measures to pandemics, I would like you to review the following case study that took place during the covid 19 pandemic at a local school in [REDACTED] Queensland.

In 2021 a direction from the state's Chief Health Officer required school staff to be vaccinated against COVID from November. This meant many school staff lost their jobs. This decision was revoked in June 2022 and only some staff returned to the education sector. They were then further penalised and had their pay docked. This created anger for myself (a teacher of 20 years) and many other staff and we decided not to return to the education system. Queensland is now currently suffering high numbers of teacher shortages across the state.

However, one school in [REDACTED] took their own approach and kept all staff on. There were no deaths in the school and their school operated better than any other school in [REDACTED] as they had a fully staffed team of teachers and support workers.

For this to be achieved, they sent an email to parents (Appendix A) before the start of the 2022 school year explaining that they would loose a quarter of their staff if they were to follow these mandates and subsequently were keeping their unvaxed staff on.

This clearly shows that with a sensible approach, schools were able to operate during a pandemic with unvaccinated staff and with no dire results. I really hope you can use this as a guide and see there are other alternatives when dealing with future pandemics. The dire results we have now are a massive teacher shortage across the state.

Kind regards
Rena Johansen

Appendix A: Email sent by principal of [REDACTED]

Good afternoon,
I have a couple of things to share with you before the start of school

Firstly,

DELAYED START AND SURVEY

As I am sure you are aware, the Premier of QLD made an announcement yesterday that schools will remain closed until February 7th in order to allow the wave of COVID to peak and begin to subside before school recommences. Year 11 and 12 students are to begin online learning the week of the 31st before returning on the 7th.

This direction is for all schools in Queensland, not just state schools and so [REDACTED] will be complying with the directive.

The directive also requires [REDACTED] to be open on the 24th of January for children of essential workers or children who are 'at risk'.

If you could please fill out this survey to let us know if you and your children fit those categories it would help us plan for those two weeks

<https://forms.office.com/r/h0ABX40Esg>

(you may need to copy and paste the above link into your browser)

Secondly,

UNVACCINATED STAFF

On the subject of mandates, after the previous mandate I asked you all to fill in a survey of how you felt about it being compulsory for teachers to be vaccinated. For your information, the results are below: <1641795463749.png> I gave a similar survey to the staff to indicate whether they would be complying with the vaccination mandate. 25% of staff will not be getting a vaccination by the 23rd of January. These staff are from all areas of the college, including both support and teaching staff. This obviously creates a huge issue in terms of running the college for 2022. You may have noticed that we have been advertising for these positions. With all of the other schools in the state doing the same and having similar numbers of staff who are not willing to vaccinate, it is no surprise that we are unable to fill these vacancies. Under the mandate, if this occurs, we can continue to use unvaccinated staff as long as we create and adhere to a risk assessment, that the unvaccinated staff all wear masks (which we all have to now anyway), and that the unvaccinated staff show a negative result on a daily COVID test. In order to continue to provide the best education we can for your child, we will be adopting this process. As a principal who believes in honesty and transparency, I wanted to let you all know that this is what we will have to do. I am sure that all schools will be doing that same thing.

Thirdly,

VACCINATIONS FOR STUDENTS

I have had a number of emails and questions about this.

The government has announced that they are encouraging all students from 5 and up to get vaccinated. This is NOT mandatory. Students who are vaccinated and unvaccinated will continue to be welcome at school.

At this stage MCC has not been designated as a vaccine hub. Should that occur, children will not be vaccinated without your consent.

As always, please feel free to send me any questions you may have.

God Bless,