



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

2023

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

No. 15

MONDAY 29 MAY 2023

(The Questions and Answers Paper published on Monday to Friday of each week will contain, by number and title, all questions to which answers have been received the previous day and any new questions asked that day. Consequently, the full text of any question will be printed only twice: when notice is given; and, when answered.)

Notice given on date shown.

Legislative Council Questions and Answers No. 15—Monday 29 May 2023

Publication of Questions	Answer to be lodged by
Q & A No. 1 (Including Question Nos 0001 to 0017)	30 May 2023
Q & A No. 2 (Questions—Nil)	-
Q & A No. 3 (Including Question Nos 0018 to 0019)	1 June 2023
Q & A No. 4 (Including Question Nos 0020 to 0028)	2 June 2023
Q & A No. 5 (Including Question Nos 0029 to 0032)	5 June 2023
Q & A No. 6 (Questions—Nil)	-
Q & A No. 7 (Including Question Nos 0033 to 0087)	7 June 2023
Q & A No. 8 (Including Question Nos 0088 to 0088)	8 June 2023
Q & A No. 9 (Questions—Nil)	-
Q & A No. 10 (Including Question Nos 0089 to 0091)	13 June 2023
Q & A No. 11 (Including Question Nos 0092 to 0095)	14 June 2023
Q & A No. 12 (Questions—Nil)	-
Q & A No. 13 (Including Question Nos 0096 to 0118)	16 June 2023
Q & A No. 14 (Including Question Nos 0119 to 0120)	19 June 2023
Q & A No. 15 (Including Question Nos 0121 to 0123)	20 June 2023

9 MAY 2023

(Paper No. 1)

* 0001 HEALTH—BLENDED VACCINATION STATISTICS—The Hon. Mark Latham to ask the Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources representing the —

- (1) I refer the Minister to the way in which, during the 12-week period from 26 February 2022 to 21 May 2022, NSW Health blended its vaccination dose data covering 0 Doses and Unknown in its reporting of hospitalisation, ICU admission and death with Covid numbers:
 - (a) Why did NSW Health change the reporting standard to blended data from 26 February 2022?
 - (i) What documentation or advice was relied on to support this change?
 - (b) Why did NSW Health change the reporting standard back to having 0 Doses and Unknowns separated as of 28 May 2022?
 - (i) What documentation or advice was relied on to support this change?
 - (c) For Regional Health, as per the 0 Dose and Unknown vaccination categories, what were the hospitalisation, ICU admission and death-with-Covid numbers for each of the reporting weeks 26 February 2022 to 21 May 2022?
 - (d) For Metropolitan Health as per the 0 Dose and Unknown vaccination categories, what were the hospitalisation, ICU admission and death-with-Covid numbers for each of the reporting weeks 26 February 2022 to 21 May 2022?
- (2) What were the documented protocols adopted by NSW Health for assigning deaths, hospitalisations and ICU admission numbers to the no vaccination/0 Dose status of patients?
 - (a) What are the details?

Answer—

I am advised by the Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and South Coast the following:

1.

(a) - (b)

NSW Health regularly updates the format of the weekly COVID-19 report based on changes in epidemiology, data collection, data availability, data quality and data timeliness. From 26 February 2022, NSW Health made a number of changes to the weekly report to make it more succinct and useful to the reader.

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, information on vaccination status of cases was obtained from interviewing the person notified with COVID-19. Later in the pandemic, when people notified with COVID-19 were no longer interviewed, vaccination information was obtained by matching the case's details with the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR). If a case was unable to be matched with an AIR record, this could have been because the person had not had any COVID-19 vaccine, or it could have been because the person's AIR record has a different name (e.g., different spelling or different first name) or date of birth to their case notification record. Therefore, a case for which a matched AIR record could not be found was classified into a single category that combined zero doses or unknown vaccination status.

Progressive changes were made to the report to improve its readability often in response to feedback from the community. As a result, the report later distinguished between zero doses and unknown vaccination status, to be transparent about those cases who had no reported vaccinations and those cases where vaccination information was missing.

(c) - (d)

Noting the limitations of the data as described in response 1. a-b above, this information is not collected.

2.

- (a) NSW Health used data matching and integration processes for assigning classification categories for hospitalisations, ICU admissions and case vaccination.

Throughout the pandemic deaths were identified through direct notification (for example, a hospital or residential aged care facility) and more recently through matching to the NSW Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages (RBDM) death registration records. The vaccination status of people who died was determined by manual review of the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR).

A report on NSW COVID-19 related deaths was released on 31 March 2022 describing the process for reviewing and reporting COVID-19 deaths and the transition to death reporting from the RBDM.

* 0002 HEALTH—UNVACCINATED COVID DEATHS—The Hon. Mark Latham to ask the Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources representing the —

- (1) Why did NSW Health decide to transpose the 'unknown deaths' into the 'no dose deaths' category for weeks 21 to 30 in the weekly Covid surveillance reports of 2022?
- (2) How does NSW Health explain the discrepancy in the number of "no dose" deaths compared to hospitalisations/ICU admissions for the "no dose" group?
- (3) How does NSW Health explain the sharp rise in the rate of death-to-hospitalisation for the 'no dose' group from 0.05 to 0.85 after the reporting change on 21 May 2022?
- (4) How does NSW Health explain the way in which for the 2022 reports, all deaths for various vaccinated groups are less than 10 per cent of hospitalisations, yet for the unvaccinated group, deaths exceed hospitalisation numbers by a factor of 6 to 8, a figure not replication in any other countries covid reports?
 - (a) What investigations has the Minister or NSW Health made into the extraordinary numbers of reported death of unvaccinated people outside of hospitals in New South Wales?
 - (i) What do these investigations show?

Answer—

I am advised by the Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and South Coast:

- (1) NSW Health regularly updates the format of the weekly COVID-19 report based on changes in epidemiology, data collection, data availability, data quality and data timeliness. One of these updates including separating the vaccination status category into "No dose" and "Unknown" to provide more granular data where it was available. Caveats were provided to the public that explained the process for how matching to the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) occurs.
- (2)-(4) The vaccination status of people who died is determined through manual review of the AIR, which provides high data quality identification of vaccination status. The vaccination status for people who do not die is determined by using automated methods to link the AIR to NSW Notifiable Conditions Information Management System (NCIMS) data. This link requires an exact match of the case's personal details between their AIR and NCIMS record. If an exact match cannot be made, there is no way to determine which vaccination record contains the most accurate and contemporary data.

Due to differences in data collection methods and purpose (i.e., hospitalisation vaccination status is used to monitor broad trends only), vaccination status for hospitalised people cannot meaningfully be compared to people who died. Additionally, the deaths are not a subset of the hospitalisations as some people die without being hospitalised.

It is not clear what data is referred to in the statement "extraordinary numbers of reported death of unvaccinated people outside hospitals", however the evidence for vaccination reducing severe outcomes is widely known and documented.

12 MAY 2023

(Paper No. 4)

* 0023 ILLAWARRA AND THE SOUTH COAST—COMMONWEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE REVIEW—The Hon. Damien Tudehope to ask the Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources representing the Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast—

- (1) Which infrastructure projects in the Illawarra and South Coast are subject to the review announced by the Commonwealth Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government on 1 May 2023?
- (2) For each of these projects, what steps are you taking as Minister for Illawarra and the South Coast to advocate for the retention of the project in:
 - (a) The Government's infrastructure pipeline?
 - (b) The Commonwealth infrastructure pipeline?

Answer—

I am advised by the Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast the following.

On 1 May 2023, the Commonwealth Government announced an independent strategic review of its Infrastructure Investment Program to ensure the 10-year \$120 billion project pipeline is fit for purpose and focused on projects which improve long-term productivity, supply chains and economic growth.

The NSW Government will engage with the Commonwealth Government on information required to support the review process.

29 MAY 2023

(Paper No. 15)

0121 ENVIRONMENT—MT WARNING NATIONAL PARK—The Hon. Mark Latham to ask the Minister for Energy, Minister for Climate Change, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage—

- (1) Can the Minister please advise if the National Parks and Wildlife Service has stationed security guards at Mt. Warning National Park?
- (2) If so:
 - (a) Which security company is providing this security service?
 - (i) What was the tender process through which their services were obtained?
 - (b) How many security guards are employed on site?
 - (c) Are the security guards engaged on a permanent, part time or other contractual basis?
 - (d) What is the weekly cost of stationing these security guards on site?
 - (e) Why is security needed?
- (2) How much did the removal of the temporary council gate located on Mt. Warning, three kilometres from the Breakfast Creek carpark in February 2023, cost?
- (3) What were the installation costs of the replacement steel barriers across the park entrance at the National Park boundary?

0122 HEALTH—COVID COMMUNICATIONS—The Hon. Mark Latham to ask the Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources representing the Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for Health—

- (1) Can the Minister please advise how much New South Wales Health is spending on Covid vaccination advertising and promotion:

- (a) This financial year?
 - (b) Next financial year?
- (2) What is the current Health advice regarding:
- (a) Third jabs?
 - (b) Fourth jabs?
 - (c) Fifth jabs?
- (3) What are the New South Wales Covid vaccination rates for:
- (a) Jab 1?
 - (b) Jab 2?
 - (c) Jab 3?
 - (d) Jab 4?
 - (e) Jab 5?
- 0123 PREMIER—COVID GOVERNMENT VACCINATIONS—The Hon. Mark Latham to ask the Minister for Energy, Minister for Climate Change, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage representing the Premier—
- (1) Given the Premier's strict adherence to New South Wales Health Covid advice and the importance of the public example of the Government, can the Minister please advise how many Covid jabs each of his Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries have received?

David Blunt
Clerk of the Parliament