

Imperative more western Queenslanders get their COVID19 vaccinations 19 October 2021

A regional economic development organisation in western Queensland is urging its community to do their bit for the state and vaccinate.

The Remote Area Planning and Development Board has welcomed the release of the Queensland Premier's plan to relax travel restrictions in time for Christmas.

Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk, has unveiled Queensland's COVID Vaccination Plan which includes a staged approach to relaxing border controls, easing of travel restrictions, and changes to quarantine requirements to people who are fully vaccinated.

The two-phased plan will not come into effect until the state achieves vaccination rates of 70 and 80%.

"Our region has excellent COVID 19 vaccination rates, but we need to keep the pressure on, and I am urging any eligible local people to make an appointment to get vaccinated today, do not delay," RAPAD Chair Tony Rayner said.

The RAPAD region - made up of the Barcaldine, Blackall Tambo, Barcoo, Longreach, Diamantina, Winton and Boulia local government areas - has already achieved a vaccination rate for eligible residents 16 years or older of more than 70% which the state will need to hit before the initial relaxation of restrictions can commence.

"This is encouraging news, but our local vaccination rates do still vary across council boundaries, and everyone must urgently prioritize getting both their COVID-19 vaccinations," he said.

The Western Queensland Alliance of Councils, of which RAPAD is a key member, launched a digital vaccination tracking dashboard last month which uses Queensland Health information.

Blackall Tambo Regional Council has the highest vaccination rates in outback Queensland, already achieving the Premier's December 17 target of 80% fully vaccinated.

"We can't rest on our laurels if you have any concerns about being vaccinated speak to your GP as soon as possible," Councillor Rayner urged.

"The border closures have impacted our tourism industry; it has encouraged Queenslanders to visit, but it has also prevented many interstate visitors from making the trip and that has cost one of our most important economic pillars," Councillor Rayner said.

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As outlined in the CWQ Tourism Collection and Analysis Report 2021 commissioned by RAPAD, tourism to the central west dropped between 2019 and 2020, when the pandemic started by as much as 20% for some local government areas.

Between 2019 and 2020, interstate visitors to Winton dropped from 33% down to 17% and the total number of interstate visitors to Longreach dropped by 25%.

“It’s imperative for our health and our economy to do our bit to help Queensland relax travel and border restrictions,” he said.

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