



**SENATOR THE HON AMANDA STOKER**  
**Assistant Minister to the Attorney-General**  
**Assistant Minister for Industrial Relations**  
**Assistant Minister for Women**  
**LNP Senator for Queensland**

**Transcript – Sky News with Chris Kenny**

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**CHRIS KENNY:** Let's cross up to Queensland and catch up with Liberal Senator and Assistant Attorney-General Amanda Stoker. Good to talk to you again, Amanda. Parliament doesn't look like it's going ahead does it? I mean, you wouldn't know officially yet? It seems impossible to get a national Parliament operating in a locked down capital territory?

**AMANDA STOKER:** Well, Chris, the purpose of Canberra really is to facilitate the nation's government and with the progress that's been made in terms of ensuring people are able to participate digitally, in circumstances where they can't get to Canberra, and with so many people currently locked down in Canberra, it is possible to do and I'm sure that consideration is being weighed up against the importance of ensuring safety for people in Canberra. People who live in Canberra need to know they're going to be safe in the process of having all these people come to town in circumstances where we know that the virus is highly contagious. So we'll have a decision soon I'm sure, but it can be done using digital technology if necessary.

**CHRIS KENNY:** The Chief Minister there doesn't want it to happen. As you heard, Anthony Albanese's not that keen but you're right, I mean it's supposed to be an important function. There'll be a lot of MPs already in Canberra, sitting it out through the lockdown. So, there might be a quorum and you can get the digital situation. I suppose there's not too many from other states flying in, I suppose South Australia and Queensland might be the exceptions.

**AMANDA STOKER:** My understanding is only a handful of MPs went home and so if it were necessary to put it on I think it could be done. But these are the decisions for the PM and his team to take in light of balancing all those risks.

**CHRIS KENNY:** Now, are you dismayed by the extent to which we've got lockdowns across this country and the seeming incapacity of state Premiers to even talk about the need

to live with the virus, pushing still for zero COVID just about everywhere except New South Wales?

**AMANDA STOKER:** Well, one of the problems we have here in Queensland is that we've got a Premier who's happily using bucket loads of taxpayer money to poll and focus group around about what people want and it's just reflecting back to them, rather than giving the leadership that's necessary in order to get the balance right between ensuring people's safety and opening our economy. What we know is that there is very limited evidence that hard borders work. What we know is that vaccination is the key to the path back to normal and anybody who really wants a vaccine is able to get one in the Australian community today. There's an abundance of supply of the AstraZeneca vaccine and we are having a million doses of the Pfizer vaccine arriving every week, including an extra million that's been secured from Poland for Australia in recent times. The vaccination program is here, it's available and it's really important that every Australian who feels as though their health and conscience permits – they should talk about that with their GP – makes this a priority because that's how we go back to living a free life and doing it in an economy that's healthy - and that's important for everyone.

**CHRIS KENNY:** Now, you're also Assistant Minister when it comes to industrial relations, a lot of people in industry and business seem to think they're not getting enough guidance from the government on mandatory vaccinations in the workplace. There's a reasonable test it's going to be left to the Fair Work Commission. Is that as far as the federal government can go?

**AMANDA STOKER:** The Fair Work Ombudsman has put out very clear guidance on how to determine whether or not it is a reasonable requirement to ask your staff to get vaccinated. There's four tiers ranging from a tier one in a workplace that is high risk and has people coming into contact with lots of people who are expected to carry the virus, right through to people who have very little public contact, for instance. And the guidance they have provided is if somebody who is in tier one, and to a lesser extent tier two, is likely to be at a workplace where it's reasonable to be asked to be vaccinated. For people in tiers three and four; less so. The same rules that have always applied when it comes to imposing requirements of employees also apply to vaccination, and that is – is this a reasonable thing for an employer to ask of their employees? So, there's really no change in the law that applies and it remains the case that a person who has a health condition that means they can't get vaccinated is entitled not to be discriminated upon on that basis. So, we are of the clear view this is something that shouldn't be forced upon individuals by government. The decision about whether or not you put a substance into your body has to be one for the individual. But we really do encourage people to engage with their GP, to engage with the evidence around the effectiveness of these vaccines, and do what's necessary to help get the immunity that's needed in our community so we can resume normal work, normal life, normal socialising and all of things that make Australia great.

**CHRIS KENNY:** Bring it. Thank you Senator.

*ENDS.*

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