

13 October 2021 9.38am

All staff email from Professor David G. Lloyd, Vice-Chancellor and President

Dear colleagues,

I know you've had a number of recent communications on the topic of vaccination and its role as the most important part of our armoury in the fight against Covid-19, and, I do recognise that a great many of you are already among the 55% of eligible South Australians who have now had their double vaccination doses.

As you're no doubt aware, many of the universities in Victoria are now mandating Covid-19 vaccination for staff and students as part of their roadmaps for re-opening. As we haven't had to close or endure the world's longest lockdown, our circumstances here in South Australia are somewhat different. However, as we look at national and local trends of reaction to the pandemic and the restoration of 'normal', the question of whether we will find ourselves in a position where vaccination becomes mandatory to access services such as higher education is now very much a live one.

This is an important topic on which we would very much welcome your views, and I enclose a link to a very brief survey a bit further down in this email for that purpose.

Personally, I have an irrational fear of sharks. Great white sharks to be specific. Thanks to seeing Jaws at what was probably too early an age. I've never seen one in the flesh and if I ever do, I hope it will be from within the relative safety of a shark cage – as that affords proven protection from being wholly or partially eaten. I sometimes wonder at the laissez-faire attitude of beachgoers as they wade happily into the depths, without cages, fully aware that there is a chance that Bruce or one of his many pointy-toothed hungry mates may have rocked up for the afternoon buffet and feeling a little peckish. I usually say to any friends within earshot at such times, 'if we lived in Africa, on the Serengeti plains, and I told you there were lions spotted just over that hill, and they *ate* someone last week, *you wouldn't go for a bloody walk there would you?*' My friends are used to this and normally counter with a shrug and comments along the lines of 'sure what are the odds?' or 'just make sure there's someone further out than you are.' Fair enough. We each take our chances every day.

If Covid-19 was the size of a great white shark I'm guessing that people would take more and greater steps to avoid it or protect themselves from it. And many of us already are. Vaccination is our metaphorical shark cage. But there are still those saying 'what are the odds...' or worse, and dressing this position up as somehow being a conscientious objection to an action which they interpret as infringing their civil liberties. These same people are required to sit and pass a driving test and to wear a seatbelt for their protection and the protection of others. Or if they choose not to drive and only ever walk places, they are still required to stop and wait to cross roads at a red light signal, for their protection and the protection of others. You get my point. Civil liberties are not only about the individual. They're different to choices. Choices are always linked to consequence and should be informed. So, I'll stick to a few informative facts. You're welcome to check them.

We in SA have been blessed with low Covid-19 infection numbers to date, with lower impact from the pandemic and enjoying greater freedoms than almost anywhere in the world. So far so great. The delta strain of Covid-19 will however breach our state borders in due course and

give rise to locally acquired infections. It is as inevitable as the tide. It is not a question of if, but when. What it will bring is a pandemic of the unvaccinated. We can say this with absolute certainty because that is exactly what has happened everywhere else. Modelling from our own state's last (and thankfully short lived) cluster shows that over 20% of the people in a single room at an exposure site – which was appropriately set up under existing covid management protocols – caught the virus on that occasion. That's more than a one in five chance, for the 'what are the odds brigade'. And as for cages – none of those infected had been double vaccinated (or to put it another way, 100% of those infected were not fully vaccinated).

Our last cluster was one of thankfully small numbers though, so let's look to more statistically sound populations – say for example, New South Wales – who are only now returning to something approaching the levels of freedom we enjoy in South Australia after 110 days of lockdown, and only after reaching a 70% double vaccination level on Monday of this week – which as we know from modelling studies is still some way short of the 80%+ levels that are really needed to minimise the wider health impact. And remember – in SA we are only at 55%.

In NSW, as I type this today, there are 6,299 active, locally acquired, diagnosed cases of Covid-19. Today. Of these, 766 have been hospitalised, 155 of those are in ICU and almost half of those are on ventilators. Which is awful. It's heartbreaking. And it's almost completely avoidable.

Dig deeper and we can see that 97% of all NSW Covid-19 hospitalisations in the first week of September were people who were not double vaccinated. Looking back at the data available from the beginning of the NSW outbreak, from June to date, shows that more than 98% of all ICU admissions were not doubly vaccinated.

What are the odds? Well. It seems that they're pretty high that if you're not double vaxxed and you're exposed to the delta strain of Covid-19, not only will you be more likely to acquire the infection, you'll have a much higher chance of hospitalisation and experiencing acute and debilitating illness. Here, now, in SA, we just can't see the danger. That is in no way the same thing as assuming there is no danger. That would be terribly foolish. It's waiting out of sight, but it absolutely will arrive. The only *choice* here is one of either choosing protection for oneself and those around you or consciously choosing not to do that. You can choose to gamble with your life and future health, you can roll the dice and take the consequences.

Remember though, a pandemic of the unvaccinated is preventable.

I seem to have wandered away from my opening remarks, and from sharks, apologies – this email is intended to solicit your views on the matter of *requiring* vaccination for attendance on campus. Please follow the link below to a quick survey page which will allow you to express your view on this matter, as well as allowing us to get a better picture of the vaccination status of our campus population. It'll take less than a minute to complete - it's certainly much shorter than this email!

[UniSA Covid-19 Vaccination Survey](#)

Stay well and safe,

Best regards