

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF
GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS
PRESS RELEASE 901
VACCINATION OF
CHILDREN AND TEACHERS IN
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

One of the saddest things thrown into perspective by the pandemic has been the privatisation of vaccination priorities in the education sector. It seems that the corruption of the body politic by the private school ‘old boy network’ has penetrated the public health services. Consider the following two cases.

1. The Scandal at Riverview, Sydney

Firstly, [according to The Educator](#), serious questions emerged in early July over how the entire year group at a prestigious Sydney Catholic school were vaccinated with the Pfizer jab, [despite most Australian students not being eligible](#).

It was discovered that, according to reports that surfaced by 8 July 2021, vaccinations were given to 163 students attending St Joseph's College at Hunters Hill in Sydney's lower north shore after a request from the College was approved by NSW Health in May.

Principal Ross Tarlinton said the College approached Sydney Local Health District in May to ask if the students could be vaccinated, given the large number of boys who live in a residential community, which includes boys from rural, remote and indigenous communities.

“Acknowledging that the College does not determine vaccination priority, it welcomed the opportunity to offer the vaccine for students given the approvals provided,” Tarlinton told the SMH.

However, Sydney Local Health District chief executive, Teresa Anderson, said the vaccinations were only intended for First Nations students at the college and not the entire year group.

“It was agreed that the Aboriginal students would be vaccinated through the state health system at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital’s vaccination hub,” Dr Anderson said.

"Through an error, the wider group of boarders in year 12, a total of 163 students, were also vaccinated. Sydney Local Health District apologises for this error."

However, many questions are being raised as to how such an error could have occurred in the first place, given the number of stringent measures in place to secure a booking for the jab.

[NSW Teachers Federation](#) (NSWTF) president, Angelo Gavrielatos, told the SMH he was "speechless" that students received the jab while most teachers were still waiting.

"We have a Delta variant that can be contracted and transmitted by children," Gavrielatos said.

"Recognising schools and the complexity of schools and that you can have in excess of 1,000 people in an enclosed environment with a variety that's transmissible by children, teachers must be prioritised."

Gavrielatos' predecessor, [Maurie Mulheron](#), said claims that it was a mistake don't hold up.

"In 'error'? Rubbish. When was the error? When the school contacted Health? In what the school asked for? Confusing a handful of kids with the entire Year group? When the parent permission forms were accidentally sent to ALL parents? When ALL the kids boarded the buses? Smells," he posted on Twitter.

The Wesley College Scandal

Then, on August 5, [Madeleine Heffernan](#) and [Adam Carey](#) of *The Age* informed Melbourne readers that one of Victoria's biggest private schools will begin vaccinating its staff on campus this week, with several others looking to follow suit after the union for non-government school staff said an unvaccinated workforce "poses an unacceptable risk to the community".

Wesley College will begin a voluntary on-site vaccination program for 700 staff across three campuses.

The school was approached with free leftover COVID-19 vaccinations by an unnamed vaccination provider that administers the school's annual flu shots and owns and operates GP clinics. There is no cost to the school.

The high-fee co-educational school said it was inoculating staff because the "best way out of this pandemic is vaccination" and staff had embraced the initiative.

This news broke as a teacher at Al-Taqwa College in Truganina was confirmed as testing positive to COVID-19. The large non-government school in Melbourne's west was connected with one of the city's worst clusters last year.

A Wesley spokeswoman said the school was "pleased to offer all staff the opportunity to have a COVID vaccination on-site as part of our commitment to the wellbeing and safety of our community".

The school said it was open to vaccinating students when they became eligible for the jab.

Under current rules, staff at Victoria's 107 specialist schools and educators of children with a disability qualify for a fast-tracked vaccine. Education unions have pushed for all teachers and school staff to be prioritised for vaccination, but Premier Daniel Andrews has shot down the idea citing a lack of supply.

Wesley said that in line with government advice, staff aged 40 to 59 and pregnant women would get the Pfizer vaccine, staff aged 60 years and above would get the AstraZeneca vaccine, and staff aged 18 to 39 could get AstraZeneca following a consultation with their GP.

Other non-government schools in Melbourne are also looking at potentially providing on-site vaccination for staff.

This report is a very interesting one since it indicates that a preferential treatment is being received by wealthy private schools over less wealthy private institutions in the western suburbs.

Bacchus Marsh Grammar and Trinity Grammar in Kew were both directly affected by Victoria's recent COVID-19 outbreak, with many staff and students infected.

Bacchus Marsh principal Andrew Neal said he hoped the school would be in a position to begin vaccinating staff on-site within the next two weeks, after 21 members of the school community were infected with the Delta variant.

Mr Neal said most of those who were infected were unvaccinated staff and students.

Politicians Confronted with Basic Realities.

The plague is getting very close to home for politicians. On Tuesday, Labor ACT Senator Katy Gallagher, who chairs parliament's COVID committee, has revealed her daughter is one of the latest Australians to have contracted the coronavirus.

"My gorgeous daughter Evie has tested positive for COVID-19," the senator announced on Twitter late on Tuesday night.

“She is at home with us but is feeling pretty unwell and understandably worried about what this means for her and for the rest of her family.

“Our household remains in strict quarantine until ACT Health advises us that we don’t need to isolate anymore.”

Senator Gallagher said she had returned a negative test result, adding she was “lucky” as she is fully vaccinated.

“Unfortunately too many Australians have not had that opportunity,” she said.

“My focus right now is on my little girl and getting her through this – but these events bring a sharp personal focus to the consequences of our government’s failure to ensure a prompt, efficient national rollout of vaccines.” <https://the-newdaily.com.au/news/coronavirus/2021/08/18/katy-gallagher-covid-daughter-kids-risk/>

a. In Sydney

In Sydney however, and, to a certain extent in Melbourne, the politicians and health experts are confronted with unsettling realities. On Monday August 16th: A further seven people have died and 478 new local cases of COVID- were detected in NSW.

The delta variant has mushroomed in the suburbs inhabited by the less advantaged in the community, even though it started in the wealthier suburbs. [Australian teachers are ‘champing at the bit’ to get vaccinated](#) and parents are very concerned for the safety of their children from the Delta variant. The unions are supporting them. Authorities are worried as more than a third of COVID-19 cases are aged under nine.

About 20 closures in August have been in government schools across the new South Wales, and five have been Catholic primary schools in the Parramatta diocese. There have also been several independent school closures, but there is no centralised record of those.

Seven schools closed for cleaning since 15 August, despite the fact only children of essential workers and supervising staff have been attending in Sydney and other parts of NSW during lockdown.

On 16 August, the New South Wales Department of Education announced the closure of two more schools, Bankstown Public School and Meadows Public in Seven Hills, due to possible cases of COVID-19.

Year 12 students in non-hotspot areas were officially allowed back on campus in small groups for limited time periods from 16 August, but on-site attendance across the education department's Greater Sydney schools declined.

Ninety-five per cent of Sydney students learned from home on Monday, compared to 92 or 93 per cent on previous days, as case numbers peaked at 478 daily infections. "Overwhelmingly, parents have not been sending their children to school, and we thank them for their efforts," a department spokesman s

School staff in Sydney's hotspot areas, which include eight local government areas in west and south-west Sydney and several suburbs in Penrith, were told in an email on Sunday evening they would be eligible for priority vaccination on Monday.

And by August 16, we are told that vaccines have been sent to these areas.

Almost 32,000 teachers and school staff in Sydney's west and south-west have been given priority vaccine access amid the escalating COVID-19 outbreak, which has forced more than 30 NSW schools to temporarily shut due to confirmed cases.

The state government's new priority vaccine program for both school staff and childcare workers in hotspot areas follows weeks of pressure from teachers unions [that has mounted](#) as young people, [including children and teenagers](#), make up the bulk of new infections.

At the beginning of this month Premier Gladys Berejiklian said she wanted "all year 12 students" in the affected LGAs to receive the vaccine, and encouraged students to come forward so that they could return to school and sit their HSC in a COVID-safe way.

Education Minister Sarah Mitchell said she was pleased the program had provided protection to 15,000 HSC students, and thanked them for coming forward. "Vaccines are an important part of returning students to the classroom, but they are not the only part," she said.

"Vaccination is also important for our school workforce ... I strongly encourage all of our workforce to get vaccinated with whatever vaccine is readily available to them."

The Victorian Situation

The Teacher unions have been active, demanding that teachers be categorised as ‘essential workers.’ While school staff have not yet been prioritised, more are now eligible to receive a vaccine.

In recent weeks, staff at Victoria’s 107 specialist schools and educators of children with a disability have qualified for vaccination.

And school staff aged 18 to 39 are entitled to receive the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccination, which presents an increased – though rare – risk of blood clotting, following a consultation with their GP.

[Government figures show](#) 7097 children and teens have contracted the coronavirus since the start of the pandemic, and there are growing concerns for children – further heightened this week when 15-year-old Osama Sudah died in Sydney after contracting COVID-19 and also having meningitis.

DOGS refer readers and listeners to the Victorian Government website.

<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/who-can-get-vaccinated>

More than 200,000 doses will be administered at vaccination centres each week between 16 August and 19 September 2021, with all centres operating with extended hours.

CONCLUSION

DOGS look forward to a time when all our teachers and children in Australian schools, and most particularly in our public schools are vaccinated and safe from COVID-19.

LISTEN TO THE DOGS PROGRAM
855 ON THE AM DIAL: 12.00 NOON SATURDAYS
<http://www.3cr.org.au/dogs>

