

# COVID-19

# RURAL AND REMOTE RESPONSE

## Media release

Friday 27 March 2020

### Think COVID-19 won't reach your rural town? Think again!

If rural and remote Australians think their town is too isolated to be impacted by COVID-19, they should think again, the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) and Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) warned today.

“News travels fast in the bush – and so will coronavirus unless more rural Australians ensure they are doing the right thing and self-isolating” **Dr Adam Coltzau, Clinical Lead for RDAA and ACRRM’s COVID-19 Rural and Remote Response, said.**

“Cases of coronavirus have already been confirmed in numerous rural communities.

“But some rural Australians are still walking around in La-La Land, thinking COVID-19 is only a big city issue.

“This couldn’t be further from the truth.

“The hard fact is that COVID-19 infections will increase in rural and remote Australia.

“As a rural or remote Australian, you must now do the right thing to reduce the spread of the virus and reduce your risk of getting it.

“Whenever possible, you and your immediate family members should self-isolate at home – and work from home where that is possible.

“It is also critical that those from the cities or other regions – including your distant family members – refrain from coming to your community at this time, as this will be a sure-fire way for the virus to spread.

“It will also put incredible pressure on our local health services and hospitals if they fall ill with COVID-19 while in your community, and we can’t guarantee we’ll be able to provide the care they may need.

“This is not a time to panic, but it is a time for rural Australians to help protect themselves and their community by acting for the common good. That is best achieved by the following:

- Ensure you and your family are self-isolating at home, and working from home if you can.
- Metres matter - stay 1.5 to 2 metres away from other people, and don’t assume that because you have known someone for 40 years they won’t be carrying the virus - they may not even know it yet!

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- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water (ideally) or antiseptic handwash - for at least 20-30 seconds each time. Practise singing Happy Birthday twice while you are washing them, and you will have spent about the right amount of time doing so.
- Look after yourself and your family – ensure you are practising good hygiene when it comes to food preparation; getting good quality sleep; eating fresh and healthy food; drinking lots of water; minimising your intake of processed foods; minimising your consumption of alcohol; stopping or cutting down on smoking; and exercising regularly. Binge eating and watching Netflix on the couch until sunrise is not the answer!
- Use your credit card instead of cash when shopping, and visit shops only when essential.
- Don't shake hands, hug or kiss anyone except your partner and kids...and even then, assume they may have the virus but aren't yet showing symptoms.
- Reduce your travel as much as possible, both within your own community and most definitely to other communities or farms.
- Go by the golden rule, 'Keep your germs to yourself' – even if you are feeling well – as you may not yet know that you have COVID-19.
- Use Skype or FaceTime – or the good old-fashioned phone - to catch up with your friends and extended family from the safety of your own home – COVID-19 can't travel down phone lines!
- Regularly disinfect high touch surfaces like your phone, tables, kitchen benches, doorknobs, taps and even the steering wheel on your car or ute.

“Rural doctors and other health professionals are extremely concerned about the ability of local rural hospitals and health services to meet a huge increase in COVID-19 patients, should the virus spread in rural and remote communities.

“We urge all rural and remote Australians to take this situation very seriously, and do as much as you can to avoid getting and spreading this virus.”

Find more information on how to protect yourself, your family and community from COVID-19 at [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au).

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A high resolution photo of Dr Adam Coltzau is available here:

<https://www.rdaa.com.au/documents/item/712>

A high resolution photo of Dr Ewen McPhee is available here:

<https://www.rdaa.com.au/documents/item/968>

A high resolution photo of Dr John Hall is available here:

<https://www.rdaa.com.au/documents/item/687>

[Contact details next page].

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**Available for interview:**

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