

# COVID-19

# RURAL AND REMOTE RESPONSE

## Media release

Saturday 18 April 2020

### COVID-19 testing: timely results critical to expansion success

Fast turnaround on test results is the key to protecting rural Australia from COVID-19 outbreaks.

Rural peak bodies, the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) and the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) are calling for investment in strategies to reduce the time it takes between testing and results, for people in the bush.

“We welcome the Prime Minister’s announcement about expanding testing across the country,” **Dr Adam Coltzau, Clinical Lead for RDAA and ACRRM’s COVID-19 Rural and Remote Response, said.**

“Widening testing to the general population will provide us with a much better chance of managing and avoiding further community-wide outbreaks of coronavirus.

“But to get real value from this step we also need to ensure that the time between a test and the results is minimised if we are to protect our rural and remote communities.

“We are pleased to hear the Federal Government’s is establishing a rapid point-of-care testing program for remote and rural Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. If successful this will cut testing times to around 45 minutes.

“However for some rural areas it is currently taking up to 10 days to return a swab test result,” said Dr Coltzau.

“Not only can this mean the difference between containing the virus in a rural community or seeing a widespread outbreak, it also means carers for unwell patients are burning through PPE for up to a week or more, while awaiting the results.

“We urgently need support for more local lab equipment, expanded access to point of care testing, or improved transport links for medical samples into the nearest testing centre. Transport needs to be daily at a minimum, and twice daily optimally. At the moment this is not in place for many rural and remote communities across Australia.”

Rapid testing would greatly assist with the early retrieval of rural patients with COVID-19, which is a key strategy not only for health outcomes and to minimise potential community spread, but also so as not to overwhelm the local health services, particularly those that do not have local access to Rural Generalists with good airway skills.

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“In COVID-19 time is of the essence to stop the spread and improve patient outcomes,” Dr Coltzau said.

“All measures need to be taken to protect our rural and remote people and give them the same access to treatment as the metro population.

“The key to this in the coming weeks will be access to testing results, in line with what is available in the cities and other major centres.”

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 ACRRM President, Dr Ewen McPhee, is available here:**

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

**A high resolution photo of RDAA President, Dr John Hall, is available here:**

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

**Available for interview:**

Dr Adam Coltzau - Clinical Lead, RDAA and ACRRM COVID-19 Rural and Remote Response

Dr John Hall - RDAA President

Dr Ewen McPhee - ACRRM President

**Media contacts (RDAA)**

Ineke Kuiper on 0408 669 638

Patrick Daley on 0408 004 890

**Media contacts (ACRRM)**

Petrina Smith on 0414 820 847

ACRRM National Office on 1800 223 226