

COVID-19

RURAL AND REMOTE RESPONSE

Media release

Wednesday 28 October 2020

Be COVID safe *now* to ensure a 'normal' Christmas

With only 9 weeks remaining until Christmas, and more COVID restrictions being eased, Australians must stay vigilant about COVID safety *now* if they are to enjoy a 'normal' Christmas and summer holiday this year.

That's the warning today from the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) and Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM), as public complacency shapes up as a critical factor in whether the pandemic can be kept under control in Australia in the months ahead.

"It doesn't take Einstein to realise that, with less than 60 days left until Christmas, a hard lockdown of 100 days – like the type that Victoria has just come out of – would wipe out any chance of having a 'normal' summer holiday season in 2020" **RDAA President, Dr John Hall, said.**

"As more freedom of movement is allowed in Victoria, and NSW and other jurisdictions look to re-open their borders with Victoria soon, we are urging all Australians – including those in rural communities – to continue to take COVID seriously.

"With the easing of restrictions, many Australians are starting to think the COVID threat is over.

"But this could not be further from the truth. In fact, complacency about COVID – together with an increased ability to travel and to socialise with others – could be the perfect storm that leads to a new outbreak of the virus, and more lockdowns.

"We don't want this to occur – that's why we all need to be hyper-vigilant about COVID safety right now."

ACRRM President, Dr Ewen McPhee, said staying COVID safe continues to come down to the same 'tried and true' messages that have marked most of 2020.

"They are the public health messages we have been hearing all year, but they are especially important now, particularly in the face of increased complacency about COVID-19" he said.

"Crucially, if you have even the mildest symptoms of COVID-19 (including a sore or raspy throat, dry cough, fever-like symptoms, or a runny or stuffy nose) please do not go to work or mix freely in the community – instead, get tested for COVID-19 and self-isolate until your test result comes in.

"It is also critical that all Australians:

- stay at least 1.5 metres away from others (when outside your immediate household)
- wear a mask in situations where you can't maintain social distancing (mask wearing remains compulsory across Victoria)

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- wash and sanitise hands regularly (it is worth carrying a small bottle of sanitiser with you at all times)
- download the COVIDSafe app
- ensure you sneeze and cough into a tissue or your elbow

“Whether we get to have a ‘normal’ Christmas and holiday season with family and friends this year depends on all of us, as individuals, doing the right thing” Dr McPhee said.

“Now is the time to play it safe with COVID, not be complacent, and ensure the only thing we keep under wraps this festive season is the virus.”

Find more information on how to protect yourself, your family and community from COVID-19 at www.health.gov.au.

Find a video from the Federal Department of Health on how to properly wear a mask here: <https://publish.viostream.com/play/bfxgwognhhfmnn>.

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

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

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 Dr Adam Coltzau is available here:

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

Available for interview:

Dr John Hall - RDAA President

Dr Ewen McPhee - ACRRM President

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

Media contacts (RDAA)

Patrick Daley on 0408 004 890

Ineke Kuiper on 0408 669 638

Media contacts (ACRRM)

Petrina Smith on 0414 820 847

ACRRM National Office on 1800 223 226