

COVID-19

RURAL AND REMOTE RESPONSE

Media release

28 July 2020

It's not 'just a cold' – it's a killer: Australians urged to get real on COVID-19

With more than 500 cases of COVID-19 confirmed in Victoria yesterday, and NSW continuing to battle outbreaks, rural doctors say all Australians – including those in rural communities – need to take COVID-19 seriously and treat it like the killer disease it is.

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) and Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) have warned that COVID-19 is highly infectious and no-one is safe from it.

“Too many Australians think this disease is like a mild cold that won't impact them” Clinical Lead for RDAA and ACRRM's COVID-19 Rural and Remote Response, Dr Adam Coltzau, said.

“They are kidding themselves.

“COVID-19 is life-threatening and it has already killed thousands worldwide, including younger people.

“Even if you are a healthy younger person and live in a small rural town, you are still at significant risk.

“We cannot emphasise enough – even if you have the mildest of symptoms of this disease, get tested immediately and isolate until you get the results.

“Do not go to work, do not duck down to the shops, and do not mix with the wider community.

“Get tested and stay home – that's by far the best thing you can do, for yourself and for others.”

Dr Coltzau said rural Australians should “seriously consider” only undertaking essential travel over the coming weeks, and certainly not go to ‘hot spot’ zones unless absolutely necessary.

“We cannot be more blunt” he said.

“Those who visit lock down or ‘hot spot’ zones unnecessarily, attend parties or other social gatherings, or refuse to wear a mask when they are legally required to, are being unbelievably selfish.

“We are incredibly concerned that some regional Australians may still be travelling to the ‘hot spot’ zones in Melbourne, Sydney or elsewhere, and then returning to their communities with the virus.

“As health professionals, we are putting ourselves and our families on the line in battling this disease.

“All we ask is that you do your bit, follow the rules and use some common sense to help ensure you don't get this horrible disease or pass the virus onto others. It's not that hard.

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“Stay away from the ‘hot spot’ zones unless you absolutely have to be there.

“Do not visit these locations just because you want to visit a friend, or because you need to go to a specialty retailer or buy a car. These are not legitimate reasons to put yourself or your family in danger!

“Now is also the time to ensure you are being COVID safe, as there is a very high chance that coronavirus is already loitering in your regional or rural community.

“Being COVID safe includes:

- maintaining social distancing of at least 1.5 metres at all times
- only going out into the wider community when you really need to
- wearing a mask if you can't maintain social distancing (even if you are not legally required to)
- ensuring you are regularly washing your hands and using hand sanitiser
- coughing or sneezing into a tissue or your elbow

“Please ensure you are taking all the precautions to keep yourself and others safe.”

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/bfxgwognhhfmmn>.

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:

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