

COVID-19

RURAL AND REMOTE RESPONSE

Media release

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Don't border on irresponsible: Keep up the COVID tests!

With more state borders reopening, border bubbles being expanded and school holidays starting, Australia's peak rural medical bodies are urging rural Australians to keep getting tested for COVID-19...even if they are only showing the mildest of symptoms.

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) and Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) said now is not the time to step back from getting tested, with the potential for transmission of coronavirus to rural towns still very possible.

"Please don't border on being irresponsible – ensure you get tested if you are showing any COVID symptoms, however minor" **Dr Adam Coltzau, Clinical Lead for RDAA and ACRRM's COVID-19 Rural and Remote Response, said.**

"There is a real danger that, because some restrictions are being eased, many people will think COVID is 'done and dusted' and life is back to normal.

"It's not – we still need to be doing everything we can to keep the virus under control.

"Even once we get a vaccine, depending on the vaccination schedule and dosing intervals required, it is likely we will still be taking precautions – and having to live a 'COVID normal' lifestyle – well into the future.

"This requires all of us to continue being vigilant for any symptoms of COVID, and to immediately get tested and self-isolate until the results come back negative.

"We also need to continue with physical distancing, hand hygiene and other COVID-safe measures.

"And it's no different for those of us living in rural Australia – with restrictions being eased, visitors coming to our towns during the school holidays, or locals travelling away for the holidays and then returning home, there is potential for the virus to spread into our communities."

"This is why testing continues to be so important in helping to stop the spread of the virus."

RDAA and ACRRM also added their support to the Federal Government's call for all states and territories to adopt a national 'COVID hotspot' definition, and to use this in managing future restrictions, to enable a better balance in re-opening communities while limiting the virus spread.

"Coronavirus is likely to be with us for some time" Dr Coltzau said.

"Now is the time to move away from a parochial, border-based approach to controlling COVID.

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“It is much more sensible to restrict movement based on managing nationally defined COVID hotspots, rather than by simply shutting state borders, particularly where there are few – or even no – cases of COVID in towns on either side of a border.

“This would make it much easier for border town communities to get back to ‘COVID normal’, and for services like healthcare to be most effective in treating patients within their patient catchments, regardless of the side of the border they are on.

“We urge the states and territories to get behind the Federal Government’s national COVID hotspot approach, and to manage any future restrictions using that, rather than continuing to take a sledgehammer approach of simply closing the state borders.”

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/bfxgwognhfmnn>.

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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