Victoria’s roadmap to reopening chooses evidence over politics

Today as Victoria takes the first tentative step of its roadmap to reopening, the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) commends the Victorian Government’s response as being guided appropriately by expert advice aimed at protecting public health.

PHAA Member Professor Helen Keleher confirmed, ‘The Victorian government is taking a sensible and precautionary approach to safely guide the state out of lockdown after what have been a really difficult couple of months battling this strong second wave’.

‘It’s good to see the evidence being prioritised over politics. We’ve seen the numbers of new cases rapidly rising again in Europe recently, with France showing record numbers of nearly 10,000 news cases in a single day, so we must do all we can to avoid the same situation occurring here,’ she said.

‘We are fortunate to be living in a country where the experts guide the pandemic response, and our response is adapted according to the emerging evidence’.

‘Opening up the economy and movement of people across Victoria too soon will risk a third wave with clusters popping up anywhere. The surge capacity required to deal with the numbers, in any country, is challenging’.

‘Some of the criticisms delivered last week by the federal government and by business groups are therefore unjustified and unconstructive, only adding to anxiety and uncertainty’.

‘Many people are really feeling the strain of lockdown, however public support for the roadmap is still strong, so it’s particularly disappointing to see the undermining of those making the difficult decisions in this situation’.

‘There have also been many comparisons drawn this past week between Victoria’s response and that of NSW, but these are mostly overly-simplified and unhelpful, appearing more driven by political gains to be had by opening up rather than by a genuine concern for health and welfare’.

‘We need to deal with the public health crisis before the economy can open up, with safety and consumer confidence. We stand by the Victorian Chief Health Officer in this regard, and we agree that opening our economy needs to be based on targets that are supported by the best available modelling,’ Prof Keleher said.

‘This approach will not only help Victoria to avoid a third wave around Christmas, but will also help to prevent and alleviate the significant multi-system health impacts of the virus, which can be severe and debilitating in the long term,’ she concluded.

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