

Australian Medical Association Limited
ABN 37 008 426 793

42 Macquarie Street, Barton ACT 2600: PO Box 6090, Kingston ACT 2604
Telephone: (02) 6270 5400 Facsimile (02) 6270 5499
Website: www.ama.com.au



NO TIME TO LOSE TO CURB DELTA'S SPREAD IN SYDNEY

Lock down all of Sydney region, says AMA

Date 30 July 2021

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) said today time is running out to get control of the COVID-19 outbreak in Sydney, calling for stricter, wider lockdown measures alongside a massive vaccination push.

AMA President Dr Omar Khorshid said people in Sydney were now facing a very significant risk of catching COVID-19, with people of all ages in hospital and many of these in ICU.

Dr Khorshid said the NSW Government should have consistent rules about travel limits within a five kilometre radius from home throughout Greater Sydney and mask wearing, and not just in the eight Local Government Areas (LGAs), to get on top of the outbreak of the Delta strain.

"Lockdown should mean lockdown across the whole Sydney region. COVID-19 does not respect geography or local government boundaries on a map, and clear and simple rules applied everywhere will make a difference -- including mandatory mask wearing indoors and outdoors, when outside the home.

"Unless daily infection numbers come down over the next few days, NSW is in real danger of having to live with the COVID-19 Delta strain for the foreseeable future - that means ongoing lockdowns and restrictions, not to mention a huge cost to the health and wellbeing of the community and the economy of the whole nation.

"We know how difficult this is for the Sydney community, but the alternative is months of lockdown or having to face the enormous human toll inflicted by this terrible virus in other parts of the world. However, we know that small changes to restrictions can make a significant difference if they are made before it is too late," said Dr Khorshid.

"We don't know if it will be possible to eliminate the Delta strain from Sydney, but the benefits of doing so will be enormous and worth the inconvenience, disruption and real hardship being faced by all of Sydney at the moment.

"Now is not the time for mixed messaging, appealing to common sense or finding a balance between economic and health advice - now is the time for ALL of Sydney to work together under simple, understandable restrictions that apply evenly to all with the aim of achieving what Melbourne was able to achieve last year- to eliminate COVID-19."

President of AMA (NSW) Dr Danielle McMullen said the number of people infectious in the community was growing. COVID test turn-around times were under pressure, and contact tracers were struggling to keep up with a growing workload.

"The piecemeal approach being taken by the NSW Government is not working and there needs to be an urgent tightening of restrictions, with clear, consistent messaging," she said.

“This means we need to look at more restrictions on retail activities that remain open, like garden centres and hardware stores, along with non-essential industries.

“Two weeks ago, the AMA called on the NSW Government to properly lockdown the Greater Sydney area. However, its desire to avoid the blanket lockdown needed has meant infections continue to rise and Sydneysiders face a set of confusing and unclear rules based on geography.

“The federal and state governments should be pushing the AstraZeneca vaccine out in massive numbers. Whatever needs to be done to get it out into the community should be done,” Dr McMullen said.

“There is a significant supply of AstraZeneca available in Sydney and this has the potential to save many lives and make a real difference to the length of this lockdown. Even one dose of AstraZeneca can cut the risks of hospitalisation from Covid-19 by 70% and halve the risks of passing the virus to someone else.”

Dr Khorshid and Dr McMullen questioned the NSW Government decision to allow Year 12 students to return to school next month as case numbers continue to rise across Sydney.

“While we recognise this is a stressful time for Year 12 students, this will expose students, teachers and families to increased risks of infection and transmission. We call on the NSW Government to reverse this decision. Making that decision now will provide greater certainty than a sudden reversal in two weeks’ time,” said Dr McMullen.

The AMA is also very concerned at the redirection of Pfizer vaccines from regional NSW to Sydney to vaccinate Year 12 students in selected LGAs.

“Regional communities have had limited access to the Pfizer vaccine and many people in vulnerable and high priority groups remain unvaccinated across regional Australia. Year 12 students should remain safe at home with their families until Sydney gets on top of this outbreak,” said Dr Khorshid.

CONTACTS:

AMA Federal: 02 6270 5478, media@ama.com.au or Andrea Cornish, AMA NSW: 0419 402 955

Follow the AMA Media on Twitter: http://twitter.com/ama_media

Follow the AMA President on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/amapresident>

Like the AMA on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/AustralianMedicalAssociation>
