

MEDIA RELEASE

MONDAY 13 DECEMBER 2021

Urgent steps required to contain Katherine and Big Rivers outbreak

AMSANT today expressed alarm and deep concern at the rapidly increasing numbers of cases stemming from the Katherine COVID-19 outbreak and its spread into communities in the surrounding regions.

“AMSANT is today calling on the NT Government to take immediate steps to strengthen their response to this continuing crisis”, AMSANT Chief Executive officer, John Paterson, said.

“We acknowledge the very good job that the NT Government has done in responding to the outbreaks in Robinson River, Binjari and Rockhole, however, subsequent measures to contain the Katherine outbreak have been unsuccessful.

“News of a likely positive case in Timber Creek and multiple positive wastewater results appearing in numerous remote communities underscores the growing and urgent need for a stronger response.

AMSANT calls for the following measures to be implemented immediately.

- That the Big Rivers Region, including Katherine, is placed into lockdown with a mask mandate and the 5 reasons to leave homes, initially for 48 hours until the situation is clear.
- That where cases are confirmed in a remote community a hard lockdown with the ‘contain and test’ response is immediately applied.
- That during the lockdown period steps are taken to introduce vaccine passports across the region.
- That an additional surge workforce is urgently sourced through a request to the Commonwealth to assist with testing and vaccination of communities.

“AMSANT also requests that if the Timber Creek case is confirmed, a ‘contain and test’ response is immediately activated in Timber Creek.

“The current situation—with minimal restrictions on movement for those from at-risk areas and with vaccination rates in all but one community not high enough to be fully protective—cannot continue.

“Our services are also increasingly being required to mount a response in communities with positive wastewater results without additional support. Major staffing issues at this time of year make it impossible for services to rapidly test multiple communities and provide surge vaccination whilst also providing essential PHC.

“With the border opening date unchanged from 20th December, the NT Government must press harder to uphold its commitment to ensure that remote and vulnerable communities are not left behind to suffer the avoidable consequences of unchecked outbreaks”, Mr Paterson concluded.

Media inquiries: John Paterson 0418 904 727