

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 : <http://www.ama.com.au/>



PREPARE AUSTRALIA BEFORE OPENING UP TO THE WORLD

AMA Federal Council Communique

The AMA is calling on National Cabinet to adopt interim steps to strengthen hotel quarantine and to establish long term dedicated quarantine facilities to manage the ongoing risks of COVID-19.

The AMA Federal Council today released a communique on COVID-19 and future quarantine arrangements.

AMA President Dr Omar Khorshid said that with COVID-19 continuing to spread internationally we need to better prepare for it continuing to reach our shores, as Australia cannot keep its international borders closed indefinitely.

“While international border closures have sheltered Australia from the worst impacts of COVID-19, we know these are having a significant detrimental impact on some areas of the Australian economy,” AMA President Dr Omar Khorshid said.

“At some point, it will not be possible to justify the maintenance of border closures given their impact on lives and livelihoods.

“Internationally, COVID-19 continues to spread rapidly.

“Many countries have seen the resurgence of the virus and it has mutated into several variants, the impact of which on the effectiveness of available vaccines is uncertain. Vaccine rollouts across the globe will take time, and depend on supply, equity of access, longevity of protection and booster shot programs.

“COVID-19 is going to continue to come to Australia. Whether it's through a breach of our quarantine or because we open the borders, it is coming.

“When we have an adequate proportion of the Australian population vaccinated, we should progressively open borders to other countries, but we should not rush to reopen.

“Our approach should be based on independent medical advice that prioritises the safety of the community over any other factor.

“In doing so, Australia cannot rely indefinitely on emergency hotel quarantine arrangements.

“Over time, Australia must aim to reduce its reliance on hotel quarantine, which was an emergency measure, and transition to new arrangements where quarantine requirements are based on a risk-based approach, including the level and sophistication of designated facilities.

“Our health system, particularly our public hospitals, are operating beyond capacity and appear ill-equipped to deal with any surge in demand resulting from any community spread of COVID-19.

“We need to prepare our health system.

The AMA calls on National Cabinet to commit to:

- The national adoption of best practice measures, as an interim step, to further strengthen hotel quarantine including improved ventilation, strengthened Personal Protective Equipment and completion of vaccinations;
- Undertake an urgent stocktake of existing facilities (outside of hotel quarantine) that could be repurposed and used to quarantine incoming arrivals, particularly those from higher risk countries or those that are repatriated as part of an emergency response;
- Put in place arrangements to fast track the approval of any existing proposals for dedicated quarantine facilities for COVID-19 that are assessed as being suitable;
- Agree to the establishment of longer term dedicated quarantine facilities to manage the risks of COVID-19, backed by a comprehensive National Partnership Agreement that assigns operational and funding responsibilities between various levels of governments; and
- Improving the capacity of the Australian health system to keep up with ongoing growth in demand for services, particularly in our public hospitals, while also ensuring that there is sufficient surge capacity available to deal with future community outbreaks.

The *AMA Federal Council Communique: COVID-19 and Future Quarantine Arrangements* can be found here: <https://ama.com.au/articles/covid-19-and-future-quarantine-arrangements-federal-council-communique>

The AMA Federal Council Communique: COVID-19 and Future Quarantine Arrangements can be found here: <https://ama.com.au/articles/covid-19-and-future-quarantine-arrangements-federal-council-communique>

17 May 2021

CONTACT: AMA Media
media@ama.com.au

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>