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AMA welcomes roadmap on opening up and learning to live safer with COVID

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) welcomes the leadership shown by National Cabinet in the release of the national roadmap allowing Australia to open up in a safe and sustainable way.

AMA President, Dr Omar Khorshid said it was important that any plan be based on science, and this plan is to be based on modelling of a Delta outbreak on a vaccinated community.

“The AMA has repeatedly called for consistency in responses across the nation – including in our May Communique [‘Prepare Australia before opening up to the world’](#), and National Cabinet’s plan will move us towards that goal,” he said.

“We need a clear vision, as a community, on how to live in a world where COVID will continue to exist.

“This plan, with four stages, recognises the important fact that our road out of this crisis is vaccination. Of that there is no doubt.

“The four stages of the plan announced today show a future that includes a reduction in restrictions, a limited use of lockdowns, an increase in travel caps, and potential return of international outbound travel – particularly for those who are vaccinated.

“By the final stage of the plan, we see a vaccinated population and as a result, a health system prepared to treat COVID similar to how we manage the flu.”

Dr Khorshid said the plan also recognised that we should give those who had done the right thing by being vaccinated the benefit of greater freedoms, which range from exemptions from local restrictions or reduced quarantine requirements, then in later stages of the plan, to even greater freedoms such as international travel.

“We’ve seen overseas where high vaccination rates have meant societies can move towards a new normal, despite the delta strain of COVID still circulating.

Dr Khorshid said that in the short term this plan addresses the issue of quarantine breaches by reducing the caps on international arrivals.

“We still need to fix our quarantine system so that we don’t continue to see leaks and lockdowns while the majority of Australians remain unvaccinated.

“But given our reliance on an overseas health workforce, the caps will exacerbate the shortages of doctors and nurses as well as other critical workers in Australia. They will need to be lifted as soon as possible to reduce the impact on vulnerable Australians who need medical care.

“It is paramount that we fix the holes in hotel quarantine, and we therefore welcome the commitment to review the system,” he said.

The AMA welcomed the increase in Commonwealth flights to help Australian’s overseas return home, and the increased use of Darwin facilities for quarantine.

The plan includes lockdowns continuing as a response to outbreaks, but highlighted that those responses should be consistent across jurisdictions – something the AMA has long called for.

“But beyond these short-term measures, today’s announcement is a signal to the community that there is a new normal on the horizon via vaccination, but how quickly we reach that is up to each and every Australian,” Dr Khorshid said.

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