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A NATIONAL PLAN IS NEEDED NOW TO TACKLE OMICRON SAYS AMA

The AMA is calling on National Cabinet to institute a national plan to tackle Omicron, urging its members not to wait until it is too late

AMA President Dr Omar Khorshid said Omicron is quickly overtaking the Delta variant around the world and is increasingly driving infection rates in Australia

“Tightening public health restrictions should not be seen as a policy failure. COVID-19 has thrown many different challenges at governments, and we need to be able to respond to these, otherwise we put people’s lives and livelihoods at risk.

“There is a growing consensus among key medical experts we need to do more to slow the spread of Omicron, including those involved in the Doherty Institute modelling, which has helped guide the national plan to open up Australia

“The work undertaken by the Doherty Institute highlights the need to remain agile and be prepared to put in place extra public health measures in circumstances where they are needed. The emergence of the more infections Omicron strain is clearly one of those situations.

“It now appears that Chief Health Officers around the country have decided it is time to act, with Professor Paul Kelly reported to have written to leaders urging a stronger approach across the country.

Dr Khorshid said the reckless approach adopted in NSW by Premier Dominic Perrottet was putting people throughout the state at risk.

“DIY contact tracing, watered-down check in requirements, the abandonment of mask wearing mandates, and the removal of density limits are together a recipe for disaster and by the time hospital admissions and ICU cases grow beyond whatever benchmark he is working to – it will be too late.

“A much more cautious approach is required, at least until we know more about Omicron and its severity of illness.

“We are not going to be able to eliminate Omicron, but we can do a lot to slow its spread, reduce pressure on the health system, save lives and keep businesses open. Indoor mask mandates, mandatory check ins, density limits for venues and major sporting events, all need to be part of a stronger national response to Omicron.

“We also need to see a booster blitz. The Commonwealth needs to reverse the funding cuts it has made to both general practices and pharmacies so that they are supported to scale up even further while the states and territories must step up their own efforts as well.”

Dr Khorshid said boosters will play a critical role in the fight against Omicron, but they are not a silver bullet. The World Health Organisation has made it clear that vaccines need to be backed by other public health measures in the fight against Omicron.

“ATAGI is looking at the booster interval and reviewing the available medical evidence and we should be guided by its advice going forward. States which are simply calling for the booster

interval to be changed without taking other steps to tackle Omicron are being disingenuous and simply looking for someone else to blame if Omicron gets out of hand,” Dr Khorshid said.

AMA MEDIA ALERT – DOORSTOP

AMA President Dr Omar Khorshid

- **1045 AWST /1345 AEDT Tuesday 21 December 2021**
- **Wexford Medical Centre, (under cover) Saint John of God Hospital**
 - **3 Barry Marshall Parade, Murdoch 6150 WA**

SUBJECT: AMA CALLS FOR NATIONAL PLAN TO TACKLE OMICRON

21 December 2021

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