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Move to drop masks on public transport will have consequences

The AMA said it was disappointed by state governments’ decision to drop mask mandates on public transport without notice, clear guidance or public health advice.

AMA President Professor Steve Robson said governments were continuing to make serious decisions with no consultation and no discussion about how to prepare for the consequences.

“We’re really disappointed with the decision and how it was communicated,” Professor Robson said.

NSW and South Australia, will now join the ACT, Western Australia, Northern Territory and Tasmania in not requiring public transport passengers to mask-up.

“This is a major decision which will have consequences and it should have been done with national consensus and clear health guidance. Masks kept us safe from infection when we didn’t have a vaccine and they continue to be an effective, low cost, low hassle and proven way to protect ourselves and others,” Professor Robson said.

“While we are now largely vaccinated, COVID is still very serious, particularly for vulnerable populations. It can be deadly for many people, not to mention disruptive to our lives.

“Restrictions are being loosened including time in isolation and we still don’t have any sign this was based on medical evidence. Masks and boosters are now our main line of defence.”

Professor Robson said the decision came at a time when worrying data was still being released, including in aged care.

“Many of our most vulnerable people in the community are the ones that use public transport the most. Masks are the last of the sensible protections and we urge people not to abandon using them.

“This is not a well thought through decision at a time when we are still coming to understand the threat posed by long COVID to our health with evidence emerging you are more likely to develop long COVID with multiple infections.”

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