



## **SOUTH AUSTRALIA ON CUSP OF ONE MILLION COVID-19 CASES**

**South Australia will soon record its one-millionth case of COVID-19 – and the President of the Australian Medical Association in South Australia Dr John Williams says this is no time for complacency.**

As of today, SA Health has reported 999,270 confirmed cases of the virus in the state since 1 February 2020. Based on current trends, the state is expected to surpass one million reported cases in the first week of 2025 – right in the middle of the holiday season.

'This looming milestone is a reminder for all of us that COVID-19 is here to stay,' Dr Williams says.

'While the virus has evolved and the risk has changed since the early days of the pandemic, South Australians must remain vigilant to the risks. We cannot become complacent.'

Dr Williams says it's especially important to remain on guard during the holiday season.

South Australia recorded four times more cases in January 2024 than in the previous month, in the immediate aftermath of Christmas and new-year gatherings and celebrations.

'Every single one of us has a responsibility to do our part to keep the community healthy,' Dr Williams said.

'If you test positive to COVID-19 you should stay home. If you need to leave the house, wear a mask indoors, and avoid crowded places or high-risk settings like hospitals or aged care facilities.'

Dr Williams says state and federal governments should continue to recognise the ramifications of COVID-19 for the health system and the economy.

'High rates of COVID-19 among health workers contributed to the extended 'code yellow' in the state's hospitals in mid-2024,' he says.

'As we witnessed, that had a major and prolonged impact on patients who were forced to wait – often in pain or discomfort – for essential surgery.'

Dr Williams also points to the risk of long COVID. New research published in the [\*Medical Journal of Australia\*](#) suggests one in seven COVID-positive patients had at least one persistent symptom three months after the infection. One in five of those with clinical long COVID reported at least moderate impairment at 12 months after the infection.

'Patients with long COVID often require ongoing medical care. In severe cases, that can include hospital care,' Dr Williams says.

'This adds to the burden on the healthcare system, exacerbating problems like bed-block and ambulance ramping.'

An [independent inquiry into Australia's COVID-19 response](#) was released in October. It emphasised the importance of being prepared for the next pandemic.

Dr Williams says setting up a national Centre for Disease Control (CDC) must be a priority.

'Australia is the only OECD country without a CDC or an equivalent,' he says.

'Without a functional CDC we cannot be sure that we're ready to confront the next pandemic.'

'The Australian Government has promised to invest \$250 million to establish Australia's CDC.'

'AMA is calling on all state and territory governments to support this important endeavour.'

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