



ONE MILLION COVID-19 CASES AND COUNTING

South Australia has surpassed one million recorded cases of COVID-19, almost five years since the first case was detected in the state.

SA Health reported 390 new infections in the past week, taking the total number of confirmed cases since 1 February 2020 to 1,000,364. There have been 1,938 deaths linked to COVID-19.

The President of the Australian Medical Association in South Australia (AMA SA) Dr John Williams says the figures only tell part of the story.

‘We know a lot of people no longer report COVID-19 cases or even get tested. The reality is South Australia surpassed one million cases some time ago,’ Dr Williams says.

‘What this milestone does is remind us that while we’ve learnt to live with COVID-19 we cannot become complacent to the risks – especially the risks to at-risk groups like the elderly.

‘I’d encourage everyone to talk to their GP about getting a COVID-19 booster, especially if you’re a member of a vulnerable community.’

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.

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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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