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**AMA COMMENDS NATIONAL CABINET ON CAUTIOUS APPROACH TO LIFTING COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS**

The AMA commends the National Cabinet for continuing to listen to expert medical advice by proposing a cautious, phased, and gradual lifting of COVID-19 restrictions.

AMA President, Dr Bartone, said today that the National Cabinet’s three step plan is in line with the AMA’s advice and recommendations.

“The gradual lifting of restrictions is welcome, but we must not become complacent. Patience and vigilance will still be required,” Dr Bartone said.

“Limiting house visitors to five, limiting outdoor gatherings to 10, and continuing to work from home if it works for you and your employer are measures that are required in order for lifting some restrictions on shopping and cafes and local travel.

“Of course, it is up to each jurisdiction to make the appropriate considerations based on local information.

“The original decision to close Australia’s borders was sensible, with almost two thirds of positive cases having arisen from international travel. It makes sense to keep Australia’s borders closed for some considerable time to come.

“Australia’s medical professionals have also responded tremendously to COVID-19 to date, despite extraordinary pressure on their work, their families, and their businesses.

“But too many patients have stopped seeing their doctor. It is time for people to get back to the doctor to have usual care diagnoses and treatment resumed.

“Private elective surgery, in particular, needs to get going again. If elective surgery continues to be deferred, we risk a build-up of untreated conditions. The lifting of restrictions signals that it is appropriate to expand private elective surgery so patients can get the treatment they need.

“Yet the risk of virus escalation and outbreaks remains.

“We all must continue physical distancing. We must stay at home if we have any respiratory symptoms. We must test if COVID-19 symptoms arise. And we must download and use the COVIDSafe app - it is encouraging that 5.3 million Australians have already done so,” Dr Bartone said.

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