

21 August 2020

NATSIHWA COVID-19 Update

Australia remains in a situation of uncertainty with the community transmission of COVID-19 still being recorded in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

In Victoria case numbers have been under 300 for the last 5 days indicating that the strict lock down restrictions imposed are helping to stabilise the situation there. NSW is still recording a low number of cases every day and during the week Queensland also registered its first case for several days. Significantly authorities have yet to trace this case back to a known source of transmission.

The number of cases with unknown sources of transmission in all three states is causing health experts considerable concern. This trend indicates that low levels of the virus may be spreading undetected in the community. People living in these states are being urged to get tested at the slightest sign of symptoms. As frontline health care workers we urge all of you to: remain vigilant; ensure you are fully across the COVID-19 infection control procedures applicable in your workplace; and, to pay particular attention to your own health and wellbeing.

Meanwhile, across Australia there is growing division between Federal and State/Territory Governments in regards to border closures. The federal government and business leaders consider that strict border closures are unwarranted and impacting negatively on the economy, while many State/Territory leaders consider that closures need to be maintained to stop the spread of the virus and to keep people safe.

A National Cabinet meeting was held today to discuss and while this issue remains largely unresolved leaders did reach agreement in regards to a number of practical border issues including the movement of agriculture workers, access to health care and on determining a national medical definition of what constitutes a "COVID-19 hotspot". After the meeting the Prime Minister outlined a number of further investments the Commonwealth Government would be making to strengthen the response to COVID-19 in the aged care sector and also advised that Australia is well position in the event a vaccine is developed.

Given the ongoing need to protect elders and communities from COVID-19 the National NAIDOC Committee made a decision earlier in the week to cancel the 2020 National NAIDOC Awards ceremony. While NAIDOC Week will continue as planned from 8-15 November the Awards ceremony will be postponed until July 2021. If you are involved in the organisation of events or public gatherings please factor physical distancing and hygiene principles into planning to help keep our communities safe.

The NATSIHWA team have made a successful transition back to the Canberra office this week. So don't forget if you want to have a yarn, need assistance or to raise any concerns, please don't hesitate to call us on 1800 983 984.

Thanks again for the work that you do.

The NATSIHWA Team

