

JOINT STATEMENT: COVID-19 ROADMAP **8 September 2020**

Restrictions Unfairly Impact Regional Victoria

The regional roadmap for COVID-19 announced on Sunday unfairly impacts regional Victoria. The roadmap does not acknowledge the difference in the spread of the virus in regional Victoria nor our capacity to control its spread.

The state government's announcements also do not reflect the feedback given as part of the constructive and collaboration roundtable discussions with Regional Development Victoria held across the state last week. There were expectations that a more nuanced approach would be afforded to regional Victoria.

The Third Step of the roadmap requires that the daily average number of cases across regional Victoria to be less than 5 for 14 days and 0 unknown cases. This does not acknowledge the unique differences in the spread and location of the virus, the distances between the regions, nor how regions are dealing with the virus. Many regions have no active cases and have not had for many weeks.

Progress toward the Last Step is critical. Again, we believe a more appropriate, regionally-specific set of targets should be applied. To subject the **whole of Victoria** to 0 new cases for 14 days and only after 23 November is too high a threshold and will unfairly disadvantage the majority of regional Victoria.

We appreciate the Government has recently indicated these dates may be reviewed, but any reconsideration would still rely on a 'whole of Victoria' approach. Regions that can demonstrate suppression and control of the virus should be identified and businesses in those regions should be given every chance to move towards recovery as quickly as possible.

As community leaders, we acknowledge our responsibility for the health of well-being of our communities. We continue to promote COVID Safe practices and encourage anyone with symptoms to get tested.

We also have grave concerns for the mental health of our business community. It is imperative that Government action is focused on reducing the pressures business face as soon as possible. Providing greater clarity and a more nuanced approach will assist in reducing the anxiety that exists.

We cannot sit by and watch our regional communities being impacted unfairly by restrictions. We call on the government to consider each LGA discretely, to identify regions of concern, and allow others to move forward as quickly as possible.

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