

Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier



Thursday, 13 August 2020

REGIONAL VICTORIA ON ALERT WITH EXPANDED TESTING PUSH

The Victorian Government had today announced a new testing push for regional communities, making sure we're catching and containing coronavirus wherever we can.

And to make sure that every Victorian can get tested, stay home and not worry about missing wages, the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Test Isolation Payment will be increased to \$450 across the state.

We want to be absolutely sure no one is forced to choose between providing for their family and doing the right thing in getting tested and staying home.

To date, regional Victorians have done a remarkable thing: staying safe and slowing the spread. But in recent days, the data confirms some concerning new trends.

In particular, Geelong has almost half of all regional cases. Ballarat has the highest growth rate in the past week. Bendigo, while stable, has a stubborn number of concerning and active cases.

And as we know, in every regional community across the state, all it takes is one positive case.

It's why, from tomorrow, we'll begin a massive regional testing effort to ensure we're uncovering every single case we can – while asking every regional Victorian to remain vigilant and keep safe.

Regional testing capacity will be expanded with additional staff across a number of sites across Greater Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo.

Today there are also appointments available today at Ballarat Respiratory Clinic, Kardinia Health in Geelong and Bendigo Respiratory Clinic at Spring Gully Primary Health.

We're urging every Victorian – including regional Victorians – if you have symptoms, you must get tested and then stay home until you get your result.

More than 340,000 regional Victorians have been tested to date – playing their part in helping to keep our state safe. By getting tested and then staying home, you're protecting your family, friends and community.

More than 17,000 people across the state have already received the COVID Test Isolation Payment while over 3,900 have taken up the \$1500 Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment after testing positive or being identified as a close contact.

Symptoms of coronavirus include fever, chills or sweats, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, runny nose or a loss or change in sense of smell or taste.

Even if you don't have symptoms, we all have a role to play: wearing a mask, keeping you distance, washing your hands – and most importantly, staying home.

Additional information on regional testing sites will be made available at: www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/where-get-tested-covid-19.

Quotes attributable to Premier of Victoria Daniel Andrews

"This is a wildly infectious disease and regional Victoria is not immune. We need to catch and contain every single case we can. Whether you're in a small rural town or the suburbs, by coming forward and getting tested you're doing your bit to protect your entire community."

"We want to make sure there's no barrier to getting tested – whether that's waiting times or missed wages. With additional staff, longer hours and an increased Isolation Payment, we'll make it easier for regional Victorians to get tested and then stay home."

Testing Locations

Geelong and surrounds

- Barwon Health - North Geelong (Clinic and drive through clinic), Norlane
- Barwon Health - University Hospital Geelong
- Geelong - Kardinia Health, Belmont
- Newcomb Community Health Centre (Barwon Health)
- 4Cyte Pathology Geelong
- Bellarine Respiratory Clinic, Ocean Grove

Ballarat

- Ballarat Senior Citizens Centre, 16 Little Bridge St, Ballarat
- Ballarat UFS Respiratory clinic, Lucas

Bendigo

- Latrobe University (Rural Health School) Drive through
- Bendigo Health, 100 Barnard Street (located in Stewart Street Bendigo, the old Emergency Department)
- Bendigo Respiratory Clinic, Spring Gully Primary Health