

Media Release

The Hon Jenny Mikakos MLC

Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Minister for the Coordination of Health and Human Services – COVID-19

Minister for Health

Minister for Ambulance Services



Monday, 17 August 2020

REGIONAL VICTORIANS URGED TO GET TESTED

Regional Victorians experiencing coronavirus symptoms are encouraged to get tested this week - to ensure we find as many coronavirus cases as possible and protect regional communities.

Since January, 360,000 tests have been processed in regional Victoria with almost 90 testing sites now open.

To date, regional Victorians have done a remarkable job staying home and slowing the spread and while coronavirus numbers are lower in regional areas than metropolitan Melbourne, new data confirms some concerning trends.

Geelong has around a third of all regional cases, Ballarat has the highest case growth rate in past week and Bendigo, while stable, has a concerning number of active cases.

All three cities have mystery cases with unknown transmission and as we know, in every regional community across the state, all it takes is one positive case.

It's why we have established dedicated Incident Management Teams (IMT) to coordinate the emergency response in regional Victoria and support local communities.

The Department of Health and Human Services has set up IMTs in Bendigo, Ballarat and Geelong to work with the community to offer more testing, share local information and provide welfare support to those impacted by the virus.

In Bendigo, the local health service is undertaking contact tracing with all positive cases. Free testing is available at bulk billing GP clinics, Latrobe University's Bendigo Rural Health School, Bendigo Health Hospital Respiratory Clinic and Bendigo Respiratory Clinic at Spring Gully Primary Health.

There's also free testing taking place in Ballarat at local bulk billing GP clinics, Ballarat Health Services – Sebastopol Clinic, Ballarat Respiratory Clinic and the Ballarat Senior Citizens Centre.

We have opened a new Covid Regional Response Unit (CRU) at Albury Wodonga Health which is run by infectious disease experts who work with Goulburn Valley Health and the Department's public health team. We have also established teams at Barwon Health, Bendigo Health, Ballarat Health Services and Latrobe Regional Hospital.

All regional Victorians should follow the rules of Stage 3 restrictions, wear a mask, stay at home, and only leave their home if it is for one of the four allowable reasons.

Information on your local testing sites is available at dhhs.vic.gov.au/where-get-tested-covid-19

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos

"This is a highly infectious virus and regional Victoria is not immune. We need to do everything we can to catch and contain every case. By getting tested you're doing your bit to protect your entire community."

"We want to make sure there's no barrier getting tested and that's why we're expanding current testing sites and opening new sites to make it easier for regional Victorians to get tested."

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