

Thursday, 8 October 2020

STEPPING UP TARGETED TESTING FOR REGIONAL VICTORIA

The Victorian Government is ramping up surveillance testing and preventative contact tracing measures in regional Victoria from tomorrow, to ensure every single case is tracked to keep Victorians safe.

Premier Daniel Andrews announced today that increased surveillance testing would help paint a clearer picture of where coronavirus is in the state, so we can safely and sustainably reach a COVID Normal.

More than 2,360 tests were conducted in regional Victoria yesterday — with 294 people tested in Kilmore alone.

A new workplace saliva testing trial is also taking place at Hazeldenes poultry farm from next week, where 200 tests will take place each week.

The pilot program — a partnership between the Victorian Government and the Doherty Institute — was recently rolled out across three locations in Bendigo, Dandenong and the Melbourne CBD and carried out by Victoria Police to test 1,000 workers.

There will also be targeted testing of other workplaces in regional Victoria, to support steps to COVID Normal. This includes surveillance testing in several industries, including meat processing, supermarket and temperature-controlled perishable distribution centres.

Victoria's regional public health units are doing fantastic work in preventing and containing outbreaks with Barwon Health Contact Tracing and Monitoring team successfully tracking and tracing several large outbreaks, including being one of five regional contact tracing teams involved in managing the recent Kilmore cluster.

Barwon Health are also now moving towards preventative actions and engagement with businesses, schools and other groups on infection prevention control.

The first three of five Local Public Health Units (LPHU), formally known as Suburban Response Units, also kicked off in Melbourne last week, including the Western Public Health Unit led by Western Health, North-East Public Health Unit led by Austin Health, and South East Public Health Unit led by Monash Health.

The LPHUs will strengthen the public health response to coronavirus and help the Department of Health and Human Services engage with the community, enable better integration of care provision and public health functions, and improve the ability to respond to future public health needs.

Ongoing wastewater surveillance is also occurring in 31 locations, and we are looking to expand this program to other sites in the future.

We're urging regional Victorians — if you have symptoms, please get tested and then stay home until you get your result.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

"Testing is our strongest weapon to beating this virus. The lessons learned from regional Victoria's success are already being implemented in Melbourne as we continue to head towards COVID Normal."

"We all have a role to play to catch and contain this deadly virus — whether it's keeping your distance, leaving your details for contact tracing or getting tested."

For more information call the coronavirus hotline on 1800 675 398 or visit coronavirus.vic.gov.au.

Quote attributable to Minister for Health Martin Foley

“Thank you to every single regional Victorian for all your hard work in this fight against coronavirus. We’re doing everything we can — including ramping up testing and proactive engagement with businesses to slow the spread.”