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GOOD DECISION ON MASKS – NOW TIME TO WATCH SCG TEST ON TV

NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian’s announcement that masks will be mandatory in most indoor settings in COVID-affected areas of the State is the right action, but more tough decisions must be considered, AMA President Dr Omar Khorshid said today.

“This is an important decision, and an acknowledgment that wearing face masks is one of our simplest weapons against the spread of coronavirus,” Dr Khorshid said.

“The AMA has been calling for mandatory mask wearing in NSW since the latest outbreak was first reported late last year.

“Premier Berejiklian must now reconsider the decision to go ahead with the New Year’s cricket Test in front of a crowd at the Sydney Cricket Ground, given the propensity for mass gatherings to supercharge the spread of COVID-19.

“This is a potential transmission site, as people queue at the ticket gates, at food and beverage stalls and use shared toilet facilities – on top of taking public transport from all parts of Sydney to gather in one central location.

“The decision to hold the Test match with spectators is at odds with the rest of NSW’s appropriate response to the latest outbreak.

“The NSW Government is sensibly encouraging people to limit non-essential gatherings and reduce their travel. In this context, the decision to allow this sporting event to go ahead with a large crowd suggests that this event is important enough to justify the risk to the health of NSW people and all Australians.”

AMA Victoria President, Associate Professor Julian Rait, said the Victorian outbreak is particularly concerning, given that it has been genetically linked back to NSW.

“While an infected person was apparently able to spread the virus undetected in Victoria for 10 days, it is reassuring that all cases outside hotel quarantine have been linked back to a single source arising from the Black Rock Thai restaurant on 21 December,” A/Prof Rait said.

“Despite 18,000 tests in Victoria yesterday, no other chains of transmission have been detected, but anyone with the slightest symptoms should be tested, no matter how long the queue.”

Dr Khorshid said Victoria is now potentially riskier than NSW.

“Victorians have borne the brunt of COVID-19 in Australia, and the prospect of returning to harsh lockdowns must be devastating,” he said.

“All Australians must now realise that the fight against this pandemic will require ongoing vigilance, inconvenience and disruption if we are to maintain our incredible success at controlling the spread of the virus.

“Let’s put health first, and watch the Third Test on TV.”

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