

Australian Medical Association Limited

ABN 37 008 426 793

42 Macquarie Street, Barton ACT 2600: PO Box 6090, Kingston ACT 2604
 Telephone: (02) 6270 5400 Facsimile (02) 6270 5499
 Website : <http://www.ama.com.au/>



Transcript: AMA Vice President, Dr Chris Moy, ABC TV, *News Breakfast*, Monday, 25 January 2021

Subject: Anniversary of first Australian COVID-19 case

LISA MILLAR: Well, Australian Medical Association Vice-President, Dr Chris Moy, joins me now from Adelaide. Dr Moy, good morning, welcome to Breakfast.

CHRIS MOY: Good morning.

LISA MILLAR: Could I actually start across the ditch with this case in New Zealand - a woman who was in quarantine for two weeks and then tested positive. I guess that just shows how unpredictable this virus can still be. Does it worry you when you hear cases like that?

CHRIS MOY: Yes. And I think that's part of the reason why, despite the fact that we are living in an oasis compared to the rest of the world, we cannot lose our level of vigilance. And we really do need to do the physical distancing and things like this, especially in summer, because we've just got to hold it down. Winter's coming, and when winter comes along, we've seen overseas, it just goes out of control. So yes, we've got this unpredictability, the variants that are coming through. Things are not all over and we just need to maintain that level of concern about what's happening.

LISA MILLAR: The concern seems to be driven also by the hotel quarantine system in Australia, and the AMA would like to see some changes there. Do you think that's moving along rapidly enough?

CHRIS MOY: Well, we do understand the governments are in incredible cleft stick on this - we need to bring Australians back home. I'm seeing the Australians that are coming home and they're pretty scarred about what's happening over there - so it's pretty scary overseas at the moment. But the flip side is, it is our first line of defence, and we really do need to do absolutely everything that we can do.

I think, in terms of changes, we just need to plug all the holes as much as we can. We do need to look at things like PPE and the level of PPE that's used; we need to look at ventilation in the buildings that are being used - but it is a very, very difficult problem. I do understand from behind the scenes how hard it is for governments in this really difficult balance of bringing people back, but also making sure that we don't bring infection back with them.

LISA MILLAR: Queensland's still having a look at the idea of dedicated quarantine facilities. We'll be speaking to the mayor of Toowoomba a little bit later in program - his city may have one of these facilities. What does the AMA think about that?

CHRIS MOY: Look, I think that those sort of things, if they're possible, are absolutely reasonable to look at. They do have advantages. But there are other things which people don't realise. You have to be able to get the staff out there on a continuous basis, essentially isolated, and there's not that many people willing to do that. The other thing is that you've got to get medical services out there of a high quality because individuals who have COVID can get sick very, very quickly. I've heard stories about, even in South Australia where they tried to put people in the country here initially, in the initial stages, and they've decompensated extremely quickly. So this is not as easy as it sounds. So I understand the wish to move the problem into the country, but it's not as simple as that.

LISA MILLAR: You know a year ago, when we had the first case, the Health Minister, Greg Hunt, put out a press release saying that the only human-to-human transmission that had been

discovered in was in Wuhan. And you know, initially, we didn't think that that was a big deal. How important was it to discover that that was going to be the problem?

CHRIS MOY: That was the key problem. There was a level of slowness to come to that conclusion. It was like this oncoming storm, and we did need to batten down the hatches even though there was this uncertainty. But we've done well overall because we have kept up with the science - we've held to the science; we've held to maintaining advice from Health; and we've done really well because we haven't fallen for the three-card trick of just going for economic solutions and let it rip; or the misinformation which is probably even worse. So I mean, despite the fact that initially things kept on moving and the initial advice was there, but then it kept on moving we've kept up with the science and Australia has done well because it's held to that.

LISA MILLAR: Alright, Chris Moy, thank you for joining us this morning.

CHRIS MOY: It's a pleasure.

25 January 2021

CONTACT: 0427 209 753
media@ama.com.au

Follow the AMA Media on Twitter: http://twitter.com/ama_media

Follow the AMA President on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/amapresident>

Like the AMA on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/AustralianMedicalAssociation>