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Transcript: AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, Channel 9, *Weekend Today with Rebecca Maddern*, Saturday, 18 July 2020

Subject: Need for Stage 4 lockdown measures in Melbourne

REBECCA MADDERN: Well, Victoria has hit a new low, the State recording 428 new COVID-19 cases and three deaths in 24 hours. For more on this, I'm now joined by the President of the Australian Medical Association, Dr Tony Bartone. Tony, always good to chat with you. Last time I spoke to you, I didn't think it could get any worse. But it has, and Melbourne's been in lockdown for over a week now. Why aren't we seeing the numbers going down?

TONY BARTONE: Good morning, Bec, and thanks for having me back again. Look, the numbers were always going to take time to get down after the lockdown. Ten to 14 days was when we were really hoping to see the full effect of that lockdown. But especially with those most recent days the numbers going up, that's a real concern, and that points to the really high level of community transmission that was present when the lockdown measures were introduced. And the numbers we're seeing is what was happening 10 days ago - incubation period, 10 to 14 days max. The numbers should start to come down in the next few days, but if they don't start coming down soon that's going to be a real worry, a real concern, and that's why really we need to be thinking about Stage 4 lockdown measures as a matter of urgency.

REBECCA MADDERN: Okay, well let's talk about the introduction of Stage 4. There were many rumours swirling around social media and obviously people in the supermarket talking about it. What would Stage 4 restrictions look like, and do you honestly think we should bring them in now?

TONY BARTONE: Bec, look, Stage 4 would curtail all but really essential services. So like groceries, supermarkets, chemists, medical services, petrol stations, that type of thing. But everything else, all other businesses would close, schools would have to close, and travel would be severely curtailed, and the amount of time you spend outside your home would also be limited. So that's what Stage 4 could look like. What we really need to realise is unless we stop the mixing and the spreading of the virus in our community, we're not going to be able to keep the lid on these numbers. This is really concerning, Bec.

REBECCA MADDERN: So Tony, just to clarify, given the fact that we had 428 new cases yesterday announced, would you think that we should go to Stage 4 now, otherwise we risk this lockdown period going longer than six weeks?

TONY BARTONE: So, to be clear, Bec, we're in day 10 post-lockdown, and for some of those suburbs even day 17. These numbers are really concerning. They're going up, rather than plateauing. We expected it would take 10 to 14 days for them to start to come down, but going up really just points to the fact that we need to introduce Stage 4.

REBECCA MADDERN: Okay. At least 150 Victorian healthcare workers are infected. It's now spread to prisons. There are positive cases in restaurants, pretty much in every industry. How concerning is it that healthcare workers are being affected now?

TONY BARTONE: Well, you look at 150-plus healthcare workers being affected and also then, the several hundred contacts with other healthcare workers that have to be furloughed because of that. That's putting a significant strain on our frontline healthcare forces to deal with the load and the demand in the various facilities. At this present time, many hospitals are having roster implications and being really, really constrained in managing and dealing with the demand that's required through those

rosters. So, it's putting a strain, and that's another reason why we need everyone to do their bit and help stop the spread of this virus now.

REBECCA MADDERN: Talking about rosters, the Victorian Government has blamed some of the virus spread on staff working across multiple nursing homes. What do you think about this? Should it be stopped?

TONY BARTONE: Well, this is really, really an important point. No doubt the staff working across multiple facilities is part of the underlying reason why nearly 100 staff members in over 40 different aged care facilities in Melbourne and Victoria are infected, and 75 residents to boot. But unfortunately, with so many aged care staff affected now, if you stopped that immediately it's going to put an enormous hole in the ability of some aged care facilities to meet their staffing demands.

We are on the precipice of something really, really challenging over the next week. We really need everybody from - and I know the Minister is working on this, but the Aged Care Safety Quality Commission need to get into this space and ensure that the standards are being met, that the guidelines are being followed, that the support is being provided and, of course, the necessary PPE to all the staff in those facilities is present.

We really do need some really urgent collaboration and action at this point, otherwise this next week is going to be extremely daunting, challenging, and bracing for even more sad news.

REBECCA MADDERN: Okay. A very concerning time for Victorians and indeed the rest of Australia. Tony Bartone, thank you.

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