

Virus cases still on the increase

By Jessica Micallef

The number of COVID-19 cases across Hume and the Macedon Ranges has increased to 48 across the two municipalities.

According to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), there were 42 cases in Hume on Monday, six of those cases were active.

In the Macedon Ranges, there was one confirmed case last week, bringing the total number of cases to eight across the region.

In Victoria, there were 1487 confirmed

“Our battle against COVID-19 is far from over”

- Brett Sutton

COVID-19 cases as of Monday.

According to the DHHS, the majority of the new cases last week were from the Cedar Meats processing facility in Brooklyn, with 76 cases linked to the site.

Other additional cases included a returned traveller in hotel quarantine and four others

identified through a testing blitz.

The state's chief health officer Brett Sutton said last week's increase should remind Victorians not to become complacent.

“While we have been flattening the curve, our battle against COVID-19 is far from over,” he said. “Victorian's have done a remarkable job so far sticking to the coronavirus restrictions and staying home has saved lives.”

Mr Sutton is urging all Victorians who may be experiencing mild cold and flu symptoms to get tested at one of the state's 43 coronavirus testing clinics.

“We are asking Victorian's to again play their part and get tested if they have symptoms, because the more tests we do, the more data we have about the prevalence of coronavirus in the community,” he said.

“People with common symptoms of coronavirus include fever, chills, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, runny nose or loss of sense of smell – however mild – are encouraged to get tested.” A coronavirus testing clinic has opened at 29 Timins Street, Sunbury, while testing is also being undertaken in the old ambulance bays at the rear of Kyneton hospital.

Community testing clinic opens

A coronavirus testing clinic has been set up in Sunbury.

Sunbury Community Health has partnered with Western Health to open the clinic at the former Sunbury Lions Community Aged Care site on Timins Street.

Sunbury Community Health chief executive Phillip Ripper said the clinic, which opened on May 4, tested more than 60 people during its first day of operation.

“The clinic has received a fantastic response,” he said.

“We had people queuing from 9am before the doors opened.

“We're extremely pleased with the initial response. Although there was a reasonable waiting time when we first opened, we are confident that the initial rush will slow and waiting times will come down.”

Mr Ripper said Western Health nurses are currently testing aged care workers, health workers, people with chronic diseases and anyone over the age of six displaying the mildest of cold and flu symptoms.

But he said the testing criteria could very well change to include asymptomatic cases.

“That would be the next step,” he said.

“The criteria changes regularly so it's always good to check before you come.”

Nurses at the clinic will be wearing the “appropriate protective equipment” and no doctor referral or bookings are necessary to be tested.

“They [nurses] are all highly trained,” Mr Ripper said.

“High standards of infection control will be maintained and measures to ensure physical distancing within and around the facility will be ensured.

“We are very proud of the Sunbury community and people's willingness to get on board and be tested.

“The way the community has come together and responded to this crisis has been fantastic.”

The Sunbury clinic is one of 43 COVID-19 testing sites operating across the state, including



A nurse at the Sunbury clinic. (Damjan Janevski) 208208_03

a respiratory clinic in the old ambulance bays at the rear of Kyneton hospital which opened last month and the Respiratory Assessment Clinic at Sunshine Hospital.

Western Health executive director of operations Natasha Toohey said any new local testing clinic was a step in the right direction to get more tests done.

“Western Health welcomes the opportunity to broaden access to COVID-19 testing to our

communities,” she said.

“More than 4000 people have already been tested at our Respiratory Assessment Clinic at Sunshine Hospital.”

The Sunbury testing clinic is at 29 Timins Street and will operate Monday to Friday, from 10am-4pm.

Details: 9744 4455

Jessica Micallef

Call-out to postpone elections

The Municipal Association of Victoria is calling for the Victorian local government elections to be deferred for 12 months.

The elections were due to be held in October, but MAV president Coral Ross said with COVID-19 restrictions in place, a deferment is needed.

“We are calling on the state to legislate the deferral by no later than the end of May so as to avoid unnecessary cost to councils and to provide the community with certainty,” Cr Ross said.

“We acknowledge that there are both pros and cons to deferring the election, but in our view the pros far outweigh the cons.

“In the current climate, community health and safety must be the overriding consideration.”

She said that holding an election at such a time would be irresponsible.

“Councils do not want to put residents, council candidates, electoral officers and scrutineers at risk by proceeding with the elections this year.

“Given the economic implications of coronavirus for councils, it is also critical that councils stay focused on organisational recovery and future planning, rather than election campaigning.”

A 12 month deferral will allow for fairer elections and also enable the state and councils to implement important reforms provided for by the Local Government Act.

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