
Media Release

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DIVIDE THE REGIONS SAYS SHEED

Independent Member for Shepparton District Suzanna Sheed says regional Victoria should be divided into sections for the purposes of assessing case numbers and moving forward on the regional roadmap handed down by the Premier on Sunday.

"It is unfair and unnecessary to include northern Victoria and some other parts of the state in the same category as, for instance, Geelong, a city which is so closely integrated with Melbourne. This will make it extremely hard for other parts of the state to achieve the 14-day average required to relax restrictions," she said.

"I have been working hard on trying to find a plan for the regions. There is no use just complaining about it. We must find a reasonable solution. I have spoken with Stephen Duckett from the Grattan Institute and our local primary health network and I believe there is a better way forward," Ms Sheed said.

"Dealing with the pandemic is primarily a health issue and we already have in place regional capacity to localise the response and achieve the lower numbers required region by region. Bringing on board the primary health networks already in existence across regional Australia will add to the resources available and ensure greater connection between health services, local government and other agencies. The Murray Primary Health Network has been in operation since 2015 and spans from Mildura in the north across to Albury and beyond, almost 100,000 km² comprising 664,000 people," Ms Sheed said.

"We are hearing complaints from so many people across the state, but no one seems to have a plan. Shepparton was able to deal with a recent significant outbreak of coronavirus in its community because Goulburn Valley Health, our regional health service was given the power and the capacity to undertake contact tracing on a local level. Regional communities are well equipped to deal with issues such as this and devolving responsibility to a community level makes sense.

We have the systems in place to see regional Victoria divided into the Murray, Western Victoria and Gippsland Primary Health Network regions to bring together their communities to deal with this health issue.

I am calling on the Andrews government to immediately put in place the mechanisms required to further devolve contact tracing and other management of the pandemic response back into our regional health services so that they can work together with our primary health networks and other health providers to beat the virus and get our communities up and going again sooner," Ms Sheed said.

Other comments

In the meantime, we have a worldwide pandemic on our hands. While Australia has escaped much of the devastation compared to other nations of the world, I believe here in Victoria we can do better. If we don't tackle this problem at a local level, we will find ourselves bouncing in and out of restrictions for a long time. The Federal and the state governments have the capacity to bring together the resources we need to address the management of this virus on a region by region basis.

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