

Media Release

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**Sheed calls for an easing of border restrictions**

Independent Member for Shepparton District Suzanna Sheed has welcomed the Victorian Ombudsman's investigation into aspects of the Victorian border restrictions.

Today, the Victorian Ombudsman launched an investigation into COVID-19 related interstate travel permits, exceptions and exemptions following the receipt of more than 80 complaints from people seeking to enter Victoria.

Ms Sheed said the number of Victorians requesting permits to return home as well as people seeking to cross the Victorian-New South Wales border for health, education, and economic reasons was growing each day.

"There are genuine reasons why we need to have more flexibility on the border and following the easing of restrictions in Shepparton tonight, we want the border bubble reinstated to alleviate many of the cross-border problems that have been identified," Ms Sheed said.

"Southern New South Wales has always enjoyed an extremely close connection with Victoria, and we cannot continue to separate our border regions in this way.

"Both sides of the border rely heavily on each other in terms of sharing a workforce, enjoying a diversity of education options, and making sure everyone receives the best healthcare.

"We have Shepparton residents camping in Evans Head and many other places on the New South Wales coast with no clear path on how to return home, and a young university student in an empty campus across the border seeking to return to her family.

"Deniliquin is a major New South Wales hub and many border residents work there or come from Deniliquin to Victoria for work.

"A Deniliquin woman experiencing a high-risk pregnancy who needs detailed scans to be undertaken across the border is not permitted to cross.

"We have babies, children, and teenagers on the New South Wales side of the border who have had Victoria-based cardiologist, oncologist, and mental health appointments cancelled due to their interstate address.

"Sun Rice in Deniliquin was awaiting the passage of Victorian staff to start a \$2.5 million upgrade of the rice mill, which has to be put on hold.

“There is endless upheaval to the lives of our border residents, and we must find a way to get back to our usual business in a COVID-safe manner.”

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