

TOGETHER WE GROW STRONGER

By JOSH FRYDENBERG

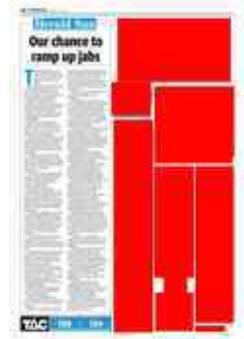
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Page 44 | Section: OPINION

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**JOSH
FRYDENBERG**

YESTERDAY I received an email from a year 12 student in my electorate.

It was heartfelt and heartbreaking.

As a young person, he said “each lockdown hurts me more than the last,” creating “a massive toll on my mental health”.

Disillusioned and concerned, he’s not alone.

Many Victorians, young and old, while remarkably resolute and resilient throughout this pandemic, are now in lockdown number six, fatigued and weary.

But we must stay the course as there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Every day, tens of thousands of our fellow Victorians are getting vaccinated, with the program rapidly gaining pace.

Recent days have seen a record

number of doses delivered, including more than one million in the past six days.

This is a stark contrast from just months ago, when it took 45 days to deliver the first one million doses.

More than 40 per cent of the eligible population have received their first dose, and more than 80 per cent of those aged over 70.

Our focus on suppressing the virus and vaccinating the most vulnerable has helped save 30,000 lives, and seen Australia avoid the fate of other nations.

In Canada, more than 26,000 people have lost their lives, and in Britain about 130,000.

The focus from here must be on vaccinating as many people as possible, as quickly as possible, with modelling from the Doherty Institute identifying a 70 per cent vaccination rate as a key threshold to reach.

At this point, it says, lockdowns become less likely and the transmissibility of the virus reduces, as does the chance of serious illness for those who are vaccinated.

Just as the health outcomes improve, so do the economic ones, with Treasury analysis estimating the cost to the economy from moderate restrictions and early

action to get on top of outbreaks less than a fifth of that incurred by longer and more severe lockdowns.

This is why everyone must get the jab, to not only protect the health of themselves and their loved ones, but also the security of their jobs.

The reality is that until we reach a 70 per cent vaccination rate, we are likely to see state governments respond to outbreaks with short and sharp lockdowns, as we’ve just seen in Victoria.

Where these lockdowns occur, the Morrison government is quick to provide support.

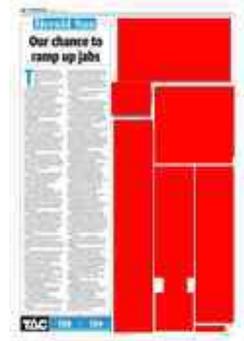
This includes payments to individuals in Victoria of up to \$750 a week for those who have lost work.

Applications can be made through Services Australia and, in some cases, are processed in under an hour.

The federal government has also agreed to jointly fund a \$400m support package for small and medium-sized businesses in Victoria, including for sole traders.

It builds on a \$400m package that we announced for Victoria just last week.

Gyms, hairdressers and cafes



are among the nearly 100,000 eligible businesses, with grants of up to \$20,000 to be made to larger hospitality venues disrupted by the lockdown.

The federal government is also working with the banks to see that their customers are provided with relief on loan repayments as a result of hardship caused by the lockdowns.

Similarly, I have spoken to the Australian tax commissioner who through the ATO is seeking to be flexible and practical in assisting taxpayers during this difficult period.

As was the case last year during the height of the pandemic, it will take a Team Australia effort, government and business working together towards the one goal of helping our fellow Australians get through Covid.

I am confident that despite the challenges we face today, we will be stronger on the other side.

As recently as June, unemployment in Victoria had fallen to 4.4 per cent, and the national unemployment rate was at a 10-year low.

Business and consumer confidence was up, job advertisements were at a record high, and employers spoke of their desperate need to get more workers.

Australia, ahead of any advanced economy in the world, had more people in work, and an economy that was bigger than before Covid-19 began.

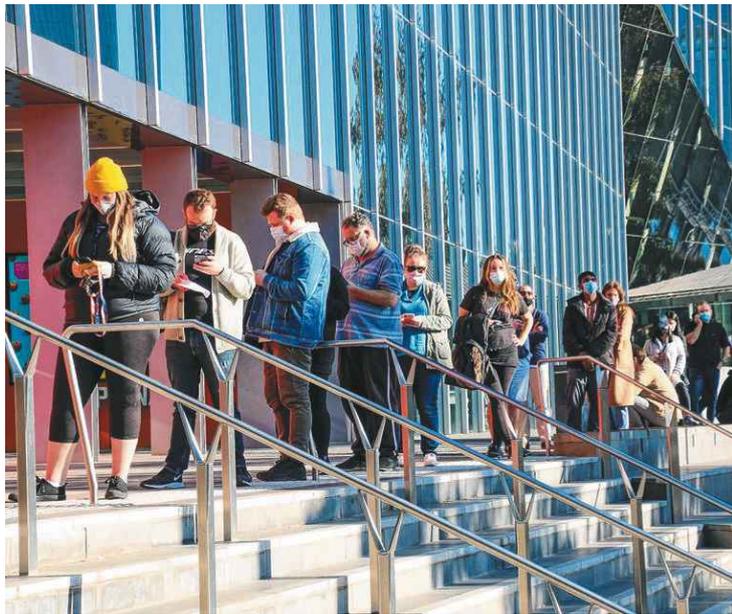
This proven ability of the Australian economy to bounce back from the lockdowns should give Victorians confidence about their future.

As the Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia said just yesterday: "There is a pathway out of the current difficulties".

"Australia's experience is that once restrictions are lifted, spending recovers strongly," he said.

And the bank is forecasting a "return to strong growth in 2022".

There is no doubt this is a difficult time for Victorians, as it is for the nation. But we must stay strong, we must stay safe, and we must look after one another.



More Victorians are lining up and getting their Covid-19 vaccination with rates increasing every week.

JOSH FRYDENBERG IS FEDERAL TREASURER

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