

Victorians deserve their freedom back

By JOSH FRYDENBERG

The Herald Sun

Saturday 16th October 2021

560 words

Page 6,7 | Section: General

221cm on the page



Victorians deserve their freedom back

COMMENT JOSH FRYDENBERG

IT'S time to put Victoria back in the fast lane. Victoria's short, sharp, seven-day lockdown is now into its 73rd day.

Melbourne has gone from the world's most liveable city to the world's most locked-down city.

It's an unenviable title, and a window into the hardship and sacrifice Victorians have experienced since March last year.

Through it all, the Morrison government has been there to support Victorians, with more than \$45bn in

direct economic support provided to households and small businesses to get them through.

Most recently, more than \$3bn of Covid Disaster Payments of up to \$750 a week for hours of work lost have flowed to more than 700,000 Victorians.

We have also jointly announced, with the Victorian government, more than \$6.7bn in support for businesses across the state who have experienced the effects of the lockdowns since July 28 this year.

The damage done by lockdowns is clear. Our cafes are quiet; our laneways are empty; and our stadiums, normally

filled with cheering fans, are deserted.

Melbourne is famous for its cultural vitality; its music, museums and its warm hospitality.

But Covid has hit and hit us hard. Incredibly and regrettably, Melbourne has spent 256 days in lockdown.

The lockdowns have seen kids in Melbourne out of school for more than 220 days – more than a full school year.

So many days out of the classroom is not only detrimental to the educational development of our children, but their personal development too.

As Melbourne University's Professor Russell, a paediatrician and child and adolescent health expert, has said: "We cannot just keep doing this, locking them down all the time. It may seem a little thing and that children are resilient, well, they're not.

"It is very anxiety provoking. It is the most disadvantaged children and families that are worst affected."

Our small businesses, too, have been severely impacted.

Their doors have been closed for the better part of 18 months.

While jobs were created last month in Queensland, WA and Tasmania, more than 120,000 jobs were lost in Victoria in September alone.

With vaccination rates rapidly rising around the country, state lockdowns must come to an end.

We must open up our economy safely, in accordance with the national plan agreed at national cabinet.

NSW is the first out of the blocks, bringing forward its opening, having passed the 70 per cent double vaccination rate. Sydneysiders are now free to go to the gym, or a swim, a movie or a meal and even, heaven forbid, have visitors in their home.

In stark contrast, Victoria is running behind. At 70 per cent full vaccination rates, Victoria will lose the curfew, but still won't be able to move more than 25km from their home.

After all that Victorians have endured over the last year and a half, there is no time to lose. The great state of Victoria must be allowed to shift gears and get back into the fast lane.

Victorians who have given up so much, are rightly asking the question; why are the people of NSW granted more freedoms at 70 and 80 per cent vaccination rates than they are?

Victorians have done the right thing and got the job, and in return, they deserve their lives and freedoms back.

JOSH FRYDENBERG IS THE FEDERAL TREASURER