

**Media release
For immediate release**

Thursday 4 November 2021

Residents urged to stay COVIDSafe and join online forum

With a number of active COVID-19 cases in the community, Maryborough District Health Service is urging all community members to stay COVIDSafe and get vaccinated if you can, to protect children and vulnerable members of the community.

Maryborough District Health Service will also host an online information session from 7.30pm to 8.30 pm tonight, Thursday 4 November 2021 to keep the community informed of the current situation and answer any questions.

The forum will be broadcast live via the Maryborough District Health Service Facebook page and will include a presentation and discussion with the following speakers:

- Nickola Allan, CEO, Maryborough District Health Service
- Meagan Thomas, Current Operations Lead, Grampians Public Health Unit
- Dr Aaron Bloch, Medical lead, Grampians Public Health Unit
- David Sutton, Principal, Maryborough Education Centre

“The township of Maryborough and surrounding towns of Dunolly and Avoca currently have a number of active cases of COVID-19,” said Mrs Nickola, CEO, Maryborough District Health Service.

“We know that we will see an increase in the number of cases rise as we move toward living with COVID-19 in our communities. However an uncontrolled surge of cases still poses a significant threat to many in our community,” she said.

“While our COVID-19 vaccination rates are very good - Central Goldfields is at 84% second dose for people aged over 16 years – we all need to consider those in our community who are still at risk of contracting COVID-19, as they may become very unwell.”

People who are at greatest risk are those who may not have had a full immune response to vaccination, and:

- Those aged 12-15 years who are yet to be vaccinated
- Babies, and children under 12 who cannot be vaccinated
- People who are eligible but are unable to be vaccinated
- Those who are eligible but are yet to be vaccinated

“Even if you are fully vaccinated you can still catch and pass on the virus to others so it is important we all continue to do all the things we have been doing to prevent the spread of COVID-19,” said Mrs Allan.

Mrs Allan said getting vaccinated is critical to returning to normal, but we also need to:

- Wear masks inside – this includes when you are entering shopping centres, entering shops, in other people’s homes, in schools, and in other public spaces.
- Wash hands frequently and thoroughly – and use hand sanitiser when entering public spaces.
- Physically distance – we are all happy to have gained some freedoms and catching up with friends is part of that, but we still need to maintain the 1.5 metres from others, whenever possible.

“Please help everyone to stay safe and monitor exposure site listings. If you have any symptoms at all, please get tested, no matter how mild,” said Mrs Allan.

“There is no need to make an appointment at our local drive-through COVID-19 testing site at Lake Victoria in Maryborough. You can simply drive up between 9.00am to 5.00pm.

Entry is via Lake Road from Napier Street. Find out more at [mdhs.vic.gov.au/covid](https://www.mdhs.vic.gov.au/covid).

Symptoms of COVID-19 may be brief, mild and varied. They could be a mild ache, a sniffle, headache, scratchy throat, or a stomach ache.

Be kind and think of others – get a test just to be sure.

Monitor [exposure site listings](#) at www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au

The purpose of exposure site listings is to alert the community when they may have been exposed to the virus.

We encourage all in our community to remain vigilant and continue COVIDSafe practices when out in the community including checking in with QR codes.

Using QR codes assists our contact tracing team when investigating cases, allowing them to get on top of cases quicker, and slow the spread of the virus sooner.

Anyone who has been to an exposure site at the dates and times listed should come forward for testing, and anyone with even the mildest of symptoms – regardless of where they have been – should also get tested.

If you have any questions about you or a family member visiting an exposure site, use the form on the Department of Health website – it is quick and easy to determine what you will need to do, based on where you have been.

www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/what-to-do-if-you-have-been-exposed-to-covid-19

“Finally, we ask the community to care for each other during this time,” said Mrs Allan.

“We are a small community, and we need to be mindful that those with COVID-19 need support to understand what is required of them, and to recover safely.

“Any one of us could be in their position, as this virus is not selective – it is highly contagious.”

There are people in our community who will be experiencing anxiety and distress. If you or someone you know is experiencing distress, please reach out to your GP, or call HeadtoHelp on 1800 595 212.