

## **COVID response a timely intervention to bring down case numbers**

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The Consumers Health Forum (CHF) welcomes the reinstatement of the COVID-19 Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment, expedited by the decision of National Cabinet at an emergency meeting on Saturday.

The wave of COVID-19 cases is reaching worrying numbers and medical experts are estimating a new peak in August. With the prevalence of new variants and the period of immunity decreasing, urgent action is needed to alleviate the impact of the pandemic on the wider community.

CHF CEO, Leanne Wells said that continuing the payment until 30 September will allow people who don't have access to sick leave to isolate at home safely with confidence that they will still receive financial support.

"Without this relief, people who depend on casual employment may continue to work, or be afraid to confirm a COVID diagnosis," said Ms Wells.

CHF also welcomes the extension of the COVID-19 crisis payment for people on income support or ABSTUDY living allowance, and long telehealth consults, which are specifically for GPs to spend longer with their patients to assess their suitability for COVID-19 anti-viral treatment.

"It is essential that governments continue to be responsive in this pandemic and support people to manage their own health, and do the right thing," said Ms Wells

"The extensions to these three temporary measures will enable Australians to work together to keep down the number of COVID cases over winter and help prevent people from being hospitalised," she said.

Ms Wells said that the focus should be on clear and consistent messaging.

"We are pleased to see that the jurisdictions and the Commonwealth plan to work together to provide consistent messaging for people to follow health advice," said Ms Wells.

"It's vital that all communities receive public health messaging that is localised, segmented and targeted, to make sure everyone is receiving the most important key information."

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Consumers shaping health

“We hope to see strong reinforcement of wearing masks, and why this is important. We would also like to see more information about the use of anti-virals and encouragement for people to keep up with their COVID and flu vaccinations.

“We also hope that communications campaigns will target businesses and reinforce obligations, support for staff to uphold safety measures and revisit ventilation as an important way to help reduce the spread of the disease,” said Ms Wells.

“We urge everyone to follow health advice and if you are eligible for anti-viral treatment, to make an appointment with your doctor, so that your prescription can be fulfilled quickly if you do contract COVID,” said Ms Wells.

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