

Hon Prime Minister Anthony Albanese

29 Sept 2022

by email

Dear Prime Minister,

The diverse experts of the OzSAGE group have requested that I write to you urging caution and prudence in regard to the dropping of all isolation periods for COVID-19.

The removal of infected persons from the community for a short time is the only remaining public health protection preventing a potential surge in disease, disability and death.

We know that vaccines, while essential, are not perfect, and that many Australians have not kept up to date with important boosters. There has been withdrawal of masking and little public education about the need for clean air inside buildings and vehicles.

The public are now becoming convinced that the pandemic is over, and this leaves us with few levers to pull should there be emergence of new variants, which could happen very rapidly with open international travel. The rapid, unexpected spread of the Omicron variant earlier this year should serve as a warning of what could happen again.

It also sends the wrong message if the government says it is ok to be out and about during the infectious period, for this and every infectious disease. Removing the isolation period would set a bad precedent and risk undermining the control of other communicable diseases.

As always, the major burden of disease will fall on disadvantaged persons, including the elderly, chronically ill, poor, disabled and First Nations people who we know already have worse health outcomes than the rest of the population.

We remain supportive of basic public health precautions as a balance for the protection not only of health, but the economy which relies on workers and consumers.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Andrew Miller

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Chairman, OzSAGE

ozsage.org

CC Minister for Health, Mark Butler MP