

Herald Sun

Time is now for action on jobs

THE time is now for every eligible Australian not yet vaccinated to come forward for their shot.

Australian citizens owe it to themselves, for their own health, for that of their loved ones, for their communities and for their country to be vaccinated at the earliest opportunity.

Individual safety, safeguarding especially our elderly and vulnerable and ensuring the health of our state and national economies relies on us achieving mass vaccination.

With greater Sydney facing a runaway outbreak with weeks and potentially months more lockdown, and Covid-19 continuing to stalk the suburbs of Melbourne, it is crucial that people stop delaying.

There is no rational or practical reason for hesitancy — lives and livelihoods are at significant risk.

As Prime Minister Scott Morrison yesterday met state and territory leaders to agree on vaccine targets and the road map to a more comprehensive, staged reopening, the urgency for all Australians to do the right thing and book their vaccination is undeniable.

While there are some supply issues regarding the Pfizer mRNA vaccine that will remain until more stocks arrive in coming months, there is no shortage of the highly effective, highly safe Victorian-made AstraZeneca vaccine.

Health experts predict lockdowns will remain a potential well into next year — carrying with them massive economic, employment, education, social and mental health burdens — and the only real way to avoid such wholesale closures and damage is mass vaccination.

Until Australia reaches herd immunity status, every Australian remains at risk from threats to health, income and lifestyle.

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation has recently expanded its advice on AstraZeneca, reinforcing recommendations that it is available for all consenting adults after consulting GPs but adding that due to the alarming outbreak in NSW, all adult Sydneysiders should now receive whatever vaccine is available, including AstraZeneca.

“All individuals aged 18 years and above in greater Sydney, including adults under 60 years of age, should strongly consider getting vaccinated with any available vaccine including Covid-19 vaccine AstraZeneca,” ATAGI’s advice states.

After a stumbling start, how the Morrison government handles the acceleration of the vaccine rollout from now on is likely to define its legacy as a government.

As is required in wartime, this national crisis amid a global pandemic demands nothing less than strong leadership and clear vision on navigating our way forward.

Sadly, to date partisan, interstate

and federal-state rivalries have too often surfaced to poison progress and generate mixed messaging on both the way to tackle outbreaks and prioritising sectors in the vaccine rollout.

Victorians know too well the price paid when containment settings fail, and as well as countless small businesses being sent to the wall and social lives up-ended, primary and secondary students have lost the equivalent of almost a half year of class engagement since 2020.

We simply can’t allow the future of our children to be imperilled by failing now to embrace vaccination.

As the highly-transmissible Delta strain of the virus has shown, younger people are not only catching the disease, it has put dozens in hospital in NSW — and overseas experience has shown that long-Covid causes chronic illness in otherwise healthy people.

Part of the way forward to ensure younger generations are not disadvantaged in their education and social development is to prioritise vaccinations for teachers, to help allow schools to remain open.

We also must ensure that Australians who have been slow to get vaccinated are provided with the confidence to come forward.

That is best served through education — but also with appropriate incentives and disincentives.

Australia is moving towards some version of vaccine passports — likely to require full vaccination in the near future to enter major events, including the AFL and other codes, as well as to travel internationally.

The idea of lottery enticements — or following the US initiative of cash rewards — has also been discussed.

But commonsense is a cornerstone of life for the overwhelming majority of Australians and it is those ordinary people, who value facts and value protection — for themselves, their children, their extended families and communities — who will be motivated to get vaccinated because it is simply the right thing to do.

One of the chief designers of the AstraZeneca vaccine, Oxford University’s Professor Sarah Gilbert, warned that mixed messaging on vaccines could cost lives.

“The concern is that if people have received the wrong message and are just too worried about going to get vaccine now, that really could have very long-term effects and we could see a lot of lives lost because of it,” Prof Gilbert said.

With more than one billion AstraZeneca doses distributed globally, and it forming a major plank of the British rollout, its lifesaving benefit far outweighs the ultra-rare one-in-a-million risk.

Mass vaccination in Britain has prevented an estimated 22 million cases and saved 60,000 lives.

For Australians still unvaccinated, the time to get moving is now.

OLYMPIC FOOTY CAN FLY HIGH



Samoa and South Sudan clash in the World 9s in Melbourne. Picture: Australian Football International

AUSTRALIAN rules football was included as a demonstration sport at the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne.

By all accounts it was a success, but there is no doubt that newcomers who attended the match were left thinking: “How could I possibly bring this back home? Where would I find such a large field to play on? And how would I install four large posts at each end?”

It would surprise many to learn that Aussie rules is now played at a grassroots level in more than 50 countries. Vibrant competitions exist in such places as the US, Canada, Europe, Asia and the Pacific. But if we want to make our great game truly international, we have to recognise that we have been selling it wrong.

We have to remove the participation barriers and make it much easier to play.

The vast majority of the world’s sporting fields are rectangular. If we can play on these fields, a whole world of possibilities await. We can confine our game to a population of 26 million, or we can open it up to a market of eight billion.

Australian football International has spent many years developing Footy 9s, to allow our game to be played on rectangular fields around the world, using existing field markings.

We have to make it easier for newcomers to play our game, and Footy 9s allows them to do that.

In a nutshell, you can turn up to any rectangular field in the world, and all you need is a footy.

There are no behind posts in Footy 9s as they are simply not needed. We want to showcase our game as high-scoring, but not have



BRIAN CLARKE

so much scoring that the appeal of the game is diluted.

In 2020 we announced a 20-year strategy to have Footy 9s included in the Olympic Games.

In this regard we are following in the footsteps of Rugby 7s, which made its debut at the 2016 Games in Rio.

Rugby 7s has been such a great success because World Rugby has treated it as a fair dinkum version of rugby union.

This is in stark contrast to the AFL, which insisted on AFLX, a mickey mouse version of the game that was embraced by no one.

Earlier this year the World 9s were held in Melbourne, with all matches played on rugby fields.

FOOTY 9S BASICS

- Played on rectangular fields, using existing markings.
- No behind posts.
- Nine players in each team – three forwards, three midfielders and three backs.
- Basketball-style jump ball starts the game, and after each goal.
- A goal is scored when the ball is kicked through the posts.
- No kicking off the ground permitted.
- When the ball goes out of play, the nearest opponent kicks the ball back into play.

In this time of Covid, 16 multicultural teams represented their communities, with all teams playing in their national jumpers. South Sudan defeated Samoa in the Div 1 Grand Final, Chile defeated South Africa in Div 2, while Ireland defeated New Zealand in the women’s grand final.

The event was a huge success and showcased the potential of Footy 9s.

We have to remember that participation drives support – a person playing footy on a rugby field in Europe does not care that they are on a smaller field.

Like any Australian, they will turn up so they can handball, mark and kick with their mates.

We are all enjoying the Olympics on our screens, and it is fantastic that Brisbane has been announced as the host of the 2032 Summer Games.

How good would it be to see Footy 9s included as a demonstration sport in Queensland?

And, by 2040, see Footy 9s included as a fully-fledged international sport, with gold medals up for grabs in both the men’s and women’s competitions.

Of course, there will always be naysayers who will say it will never happen. Yet if we were told at the Sydney Olympics that skateboarding, climbing and breakdancing would all be future inclusions to the Games, what would we have said?

Our great game of Australian rules football sells itself.

But let’s sell it better and make it much easier to play all over the globe. If we build it, they will come.

BRIAN CLARKE IS CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL INTERNATIONAL

TAC	ROAD DEATHS THIS YEAR	ROAD DEATHS LAST YEAR
	126	129
Victorian deaths in 2021, compared with the same day last year		