



How Far Down?

Western Victoria MP Bev McArthur raised a Parliamentary Adjournment Matter with the Premier over the specific objective of the current lockdown.

The Premier constantly reminds Victorians that “we must drive the cases down” but Mrs McArthur said that “we are never told what defines *how far down*.”

Adjournment matter incorporated into Hansard and attributable to Bev McArthur MP:

“My adjournment matter is for the Premier.

When the coronavirus first arrived in Victoria, we were told that we had to go into lockdown to ‘flatten the curve’.

We were told that the curve had to be flattened, so our health system was not overwhelmed and so we could accumulate enough medical equipment to combat the virus and protect our health workers.

That was nearly 6 months ago.

Now, we find ourselves amidst another set of lockdowns and lock ups, with no clear objective in sight.

We are constantly told that ‘we must drive the cases down’ but are never told how far down. What is the definition of ‘down’?

The Premier, his Crisis Cabinet and senior health officials have not been honest with Victorians.

The public has not been told what the true cost of the lockdowns are and what case numbers we need before they end their draconian form of State control over individual lives.

Are we aiming for elimination – like New Zealand’s failed strategy that is evidently unsustainable – or are we still attempting to ‘flatten the curve’ to avoid the overwhelming of the health system?

If the capacity of the health system has not been dramatically increased to bear the burden of increased cases, over the past six months, then those in charge should step aside.

Both the Federal and State Governments have committed significant expenditure to mental health services for Victoria in recent months.

On March 30, the Prime Minister announced a \$1.1 billion support package for mental health services in preparation for the full impact of the coronavirus.

This week, the Federal Government announced that it will invest another nearly \$32 million in 15 new mental health clinics in our state.

In May, the Federal Government also committed an additional \$20 million in spending on mental health services.

The State Government has recently committed \$26 million to address the mental health needs of small business owners and their workers.

Implicit in these commitments, is an acknowledgement of the enormous damage to the mental health of many Victorians as a consequence of this lockdown.

Despite that, the Victorian Government has not been clear to the public about how many lives are being lost to suicide or permanent damage to mental wellbeing.

There are many costs to this lockdown, in both lives and livelihoods, that do not exclusively pertain to the virus itself.

On Sunday 2 August, the Premier declared a State of Disaster in Victoria, which can only be predicated on the legislative requirement that there is an emergency which “constitutes or is likely to constitute a significant and widespread danger to life or property in Victoria”.

Perhaps ironically, the State of Disaster itself and the draconian regulations that come with it, are a primary cause of the significant danger to life to life or property.

The action I seek is for the Premier to immediately make it clear to Victorians the specific objective of the lockdowns with respect to case numbers and the rationale behind it, including supporting data around the cost to the state and lives lost to suicide.”

18 August 2020