

**DAVID HARRIS MP**

**MEMBER FOR WYONG**

**GOVERNMENTS CAUGHT WITH “PANTS DOWN” BY COVID SURGE**

The recent surge in Covid-19 cases has demonstrated that both the State and Federal governments were underprepared for both the increase in cases and logistical considerations during the holiday period.

Lack of PCR testing facilities, access to rapid antigen tests, rules around isolation and supply chain issues have plagued the Christmas period and is continuing to cause problems, even as we approach a planned return to school.

The Christmas holiday period saw many private testing facilities close for the holidays creating huge queues and uncertainty at a time when omicron was causing a huge increase in cases.

Access to rapid antigen tests has been difficult with low supplies and high prices impacting on the community’s ability to follow government advice about self-testing, leading to businesses and families being adversely impacted.

The federal government’s promise of free rapid antigen tests has also been shown to have been bad planning and messaging with pharmacies finding out that they are responsible for sourcing the tests, including paying high prices up front, and then finding out that they have two seek reimbursement from a system that has not yet been developed.

At a New South Wales government level, the service New South Wales app is not ready to record positive rapid antigen tests, leading to underreporting of cases.

Now with students returning to school at the end of the month, we are experiencing a lack of vaccine supply for children with many pharmacies and GPs having to cancel appointments because promised stocks have not arrived.

“The communities confidence in both the New South Wales government and the Australian government response to Covid-19 is being undermined because of a chaotic approach since November, with both levels of government scrambling to react to the reality on the ground being experienced by communities including the Central Coast.” Said David Harris

“People are trying their hardest to be responsible and follow the rules but the basic infrastructure needed to comply either doesn’t exist, is too hard to access or doesn’t work and this is adding to the stress families are already feeling with sickness spreading through their loved ones,” said David Harris

“The New South Wales government must find a way to provide rapid antigen tests for free, ensure the Service New South Wales app is working to provide recording of positive tests and that our GPs are properly educated in the procedures they should follow when their patients contact them looking for help.” Said Mr Harris

“It’s time that the politicians who are being driven by ideology get out of the way and let the health experts back in charge so that the community can have confidence that this pandemic is being handled in the best way,” said Mr Harris

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