



# STUART GRIMLEY MP

Member for Western Victoria  
State Leader of Derryn Hinch's Justice Party



The Hon Daniel Andrews  
Premier of Victoria  
Via email only: Daniel.andrews@parliament.vic.gov.au

30 August 2021

**RE: Current Mental Health Toll on Victorians**

Dear Premier,

I don't envy the position of any Government currently, having to make decisions about the potential ramifications of restrictions on physical health and mental health versus the impact of having fewer restrictions. It's a balance that needs to be struck, but one which I don't think has been achieved yet in Victoria.

Calls to helplines are going unanswered and the studies emerging about presentations to emergency wards by children (especially adolescent females) are shocking. The mental health crisis is the silent disease of this pandemic.

I would therefore like to request that mental health professionals – especially those who have expertise in dealing with children's mental health – should have a seat at the table during daily briefings, to provide insights and advice on the likely impact of restrictions on children and adult's mental health. Mental health deaths and hospitalisations are growing in number, yet we don't hear these numbers being quoted in daily statistics like we do with COVID-19. We need to do more than give lip service to those doing it tough.

Unfortunately, when COVID-19 is at a manageable level through vaccines, mental health will continue to have an effect on families and communities for many years to come.

I am pleading with the Government to seriously consider loosening of restrictions that will ease the burden on mental health sooner rather than later, by:

- Allowing children to have 'friend bubbles'
- Opening playgrounds, basketball courts and other equipment so children can play with each other
- Extending the 5km radius to at least 10km or 15km so families can get out and exercise more by going fishing, camping or engaging in other activities where they can safely socially distance.

The 5km radius is particularly restrictive in regional/rural areas, where there have been minimal COVID-19 cases.

I would also like to see the State Government commit to a public relations campaign promoting some of the things people can do whilst restrictions are in place to stay healthy. Vulnerable communities should also be receiving outreach at this time, as they are particularly susceptible to detrimental outcomes from restrictions.

It is time for action and time to step up and save lives that are being lost to this mental health crisis as a result of restrictions and lockdowns.

I hope that Parliament will be able to sit in the very near future, so I can put forward these concerns in person to your Government Ministers. In the meantime, I look forward to your reply at your earliest convenience.

Kind regards,



**Stuart Grimley MP**  
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