

VICTORIA'S - Mental Health Crisis Looming – Get Fitness Facilities Open

The package announced is merely a token for small business it fails to address the growing mental health crisis according to fitness industry body VIC Active.

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Crisis Looming – Get [Fitness](#) Facilities
Open



Gyms Are Safe

The State Government's new business support package announced on Sunday is merely a token for small business and fails to address the growing mental health crisis in Victoria, according to fitness industry body [VIC Active](#).

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VIC Active also notes that the average infection caseload is 4.1 in regional Victoria – well below the Premier's safe threshold.”

Tim Schleiger

The Government also announced a dozen new mental health clinics would open this week, but VIC Active spokesman Tim Schleiger said both the new clinics and the financial assistance were merely band aid solutions that would not mitigate long term problems.

“The best way to get Victorians back on track is to re-open fitness facilities with COVID-safe plans; the 40,000 fitness and wellbeing professionals across the state are ready,

willing and able to get the community on the road to recovery,” Mr Schleiger said.

“The fact that the Government is opening pop-up mental health clinics confirms the VIC Active position that Victoria is in the midst of a physical and mental health crisis.

“We know that Lifeline logged a record day for inbound calls last week and hospital data shows that mental health presentations have spiked 6% across the board in recent weeks.

“There have been almost a million engagements on Beyond Blue's online forums. And that only

reflects those who are actively seeking treatment – thousands likely will be suffering alone and in silence.

“Fitness centres are integral to maintaining physical and mental wellbeing and so it’s now critical that people can be allowed to access them in a responsible and COVID-safe way.

“Gyms were already highly regulated, clean and sanitary environments prior to the pandemic. All VIC Active members have COVID-Safe plans in place which increase the level of safety. The suggestion that fitness centres are high risk is simply wrong.”

Mr Schleiger pointed to data collected in New South Wales by Fitness Australia that revealed that from more than 7.3 million check-ins at gyms in an eight-week period after lockdowns lifted on June 14, there was no evidence of any COVID transmission.

He added that the financial assistance on offer may help fitness centres tread water, but only operating in a COVID-safe way would help both businesses and people struggling to stay positive.

“This is now the sixth month of the pandemic restrictions. It’s gone on long enough and we have learned a lot about the way the virus behaves and how we can manage it,” Mr Schleiger said.

“It makes no sense to make use of what we have learned and got things moving in a safe way. Fitness centres are a perfect embodiment of that – we know how we can manage the situation and we’re proven to be safe.

“The health and wellbeing of hundreds of thousands of Victorians rely on it.”

team@vicactive.org

VIC Active argues that ongoing closures are damaging the mental health and wellbeing of hundreds of thousands of Victorians, and the late November target for re-opening is not realistic and likely to exacerbate the ongoing health crisis.

“We need urgent, meaningful engagement with the Government’s Health advisory group so that

**THERE IS A MENTAL AND
PHYSICAL HEALTH CRISIS
IN VICTORIA.**

FACT.

Mental Health Crisis

they are properly informed as to the COVID safety of fitness facilities and can get them open quickly for the benefit of the Victorian community,” Mr Schleiger said.

“We have all the empirical data the Government needs and is eager to assist the Government to reach sound scientific conclusions as part of the State’s roadmap to recovery.”

VIC Active also notes that the average infection caseload is 4.1 in [regional](#) Victoria – well below the Premier’s safe threshold. Mr Schleiger said there is no argument on public health or safety grounds not to re-open gyms in regional Victoria now.

So far, more than 100 owners, comprising 400 sites and representing over 4,000 staff and 300,000 members have joined VIC Active, with all operators, suppliers and industry groups urged to join. High profile members include the Victorian operators of major gym chains including F45 and Body Fit Training.

The broader industry in Victoria comprises more than 45,000 staff. While one in six Victorians regularly attend a fitness centre.

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