

## **32nd AHSPO *Conference***

***(Thursday opening)***

**Good morning, everyone and welcome to the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual AHSPO Conference being held this year at the Mantra Lorne, and once again this year's conference has been sold out.**

**Can I start by acknowledging the Aboriginal Traditional Owners - the Gunditjmara people are the traditional custodians of Gadubanud lands and waters upon which our activities are being held over the next few days and pay respects to their Elders both past and present.**

**Cn I start by asking you all to please stand up...now give yourselves a round of applause for being here today.**

**As the Conference is called “Procurement during a Pandemic” I’d like to jump right in and address the elephant in the room, namely COVID-19 and give you a brief synoptic history of the coronavirus epidemic in this country and the state of Victoria.**

**I would like to begin by acknowledging the work done by Calla Wahlquist, Tory Shepherd, Melissa Davey and Caitlin Cassidy for their recent article in the Guardian from which I have acquired the following facts, figures and timeline.**

**On the 25th January 2020 - the first case was identified when the Diamond Princess Cruise Ship was on a voyage in Yokohama Japan with 2,666 passengers and 1,045 crew on board... eventually 691**

**people would test positive and 7 people died.**

**By early March – when another cruise ship, the Ruby Princess, arrived in Sydney with ambulances waiting to pickup 2 suspected COVID-19 cases, all 2,700 passengers disembarked travelling home to other states or boarding international flights to their home countries. The cruise ship would eventually be linked to at least 850 positive cases and sadly 28 deaths.**

**On March 27<sup>th</sup> – the National Cabinet announced that all International travellers to Australia would be subject to 14 days of mandatory hotel quarantine. Two days later the country had entered its first lockdown.**

**In May 2020 – several employees in the hotel quarantine system in Melbourne, under health protocols, caught the virus and transmitted it to their communities. Genomic sequencing of positive tests recorded from May to August showed that 99% of cases could all be linked back to three quarantine hotels.**

**By the end of May – there were 100 deaths**

**By the end of August – there were 500.**

**On the 30<sup>th</sup> June – The Victorian Premier placed 36 suburbs of Melbourne into lockdown.**

**On the 4<sup>th</sup> July – 9 public housing towers in Melbourne with a combined population of 3,000 residents were placed in ‘hard lockdown’ with no other warning other than the sudden presence**

**of 500 police officers. Two days later Victoria reported 127 positive cases with 22 more fatalities**

**Across the border in New South Wales the Premier introduced “stage four” lockdown conditions, including the mandatory wearing of face masks. It was eight weeks before the curfew was lifted and eleven weeks before a time limit on exercise was lifted.**

**By this time the virus had already moved into Aged Care Homes and by the 5<sup>th</sup> of August at the peak of the wave, 725 new cases and 15 new deaths were reported. In total there were 655 COVID-19 related deaths in Aged Care in Victoria in 2020.**

**By August 2021 the number of deaths had risen to 1,000.**

**On October 26<sup>th</sup> – Melbourne emerged from lockdown recording its first “doughnut day” - no new cases and no new deaths.**

**At this time Australia believed it could beat the pandemic.**

**On December 20<sup>th</sup> - a small cluster of cases in Sydney’s Northern beaches resulted in other States introducing restrictions on travel from Sydney and borders were slammed shut again, with a new protocol established – “localised snap lockdowns” to contain outbreaks.**

**By the end of February 2021 – the first COVID-19 vaccines had arrived in Australia. There was a sense of optimism, despite the significant complication of a blood clot warning from the AstraZenaca vaccine, which resulted in a**

**recommendation that people under 50 be given the Pfizer vaccine instead, which resulted in a slowing down of the vaccine rollout.**

**On June 26<sup>th</sup> – Sydney was once again placed into lockdown and subjected to harsher restrictions and heavily targeted by the Police Force.**

**By July – the outbreak had once again taken hold in Melbourne, which was subsequently plunged back into lockdown for a further 77 days. The same month the New South Wales Premier encouraged people under 40 to get the AstraZeneca vaccine as they were not yet eligible to receive the Pfizer. Victoria soon followed suit.**

**On August 19<sup>th</sup> – Australia's vaccination program was opened to everyone aged**

**16 and over. Towards the end of August, Australia recorded its worst daily case of the pandemic so far with 1,218 in New South Wales and 92 in Victoria and an extended lockdown in Melbourne.**

**By November 5<sup>th</sup> – 80% of Australians over 16 had received two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine. New South Wales and Victoria opened up and promised they would not return to lockdown again, this despite the warning of a new variant popping up in other countries, that being “OMICRON”, which arrived with a vengeance in mid-December spreading faster than its predecessors. RATS (Rapid Antigen Tests) were soon in high demand and by the end of December had doubled in price.**



**On December 30<sup>th</sup> – Australia recorded more than 33,000 positive cases.**

**On January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022 – there were more than 175,000 new cases with OMICRON ripping through young Australians.**

**By February 21<sup>st</sup> – more than two-thirds of Australians over 16 had received three shots of a COVID-19 vaccine and the daily case number was just over 25,000, but conversely the death rate had begun to climb rapidly.**

**On February 22<sup>nd</sup> – Australia recorded 59 deaths bringing its cumulative death toll to 5,025.**

**There has been no significant change in daily death rate between February and now, but the line showed a stubborn and steep upwards trend.**

**In the middle of June, Professor Margaret Hellard from the Burnet Institute told a Victorian Parliamentary inquiry that Australia could record as many as 15,000 COVID-19 deaths in 2022 alone.**

**In July – Australia recorded its 10,000th COVID-19 death.**

**Now by comparison and I don't believe that in this case they mean or justify anything, in the same period**

- there have been over 1,000,000 deaths in the United States**
- there have been over 180,700 deaths in the United Kingdom and**
- there have been 1,581 in New Zealand**
- and on a lighter note...none in the Vatican City.**

**The total World mortality rate as of July 8<sup>th</sup> was 6,368,901.**

**Now bearing all what I have said and bringing it back full circle to this year's conference programme, you will hear from DHL on how vaccines were delivered during this period...from Bernadine McNamara, General Counsel from Barwon Health on the Pandemic, and the Law...and on Friday from Michelle Lewis on How to Manage Aged Care Facilities during a pandemic.**

**And to finish**

## **11 – COVID 19 and Vegas**

I wish Covid-19 had started in Las Vegas.

Because what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas.

**And on that note I would like to open the 32nd second conference and introduce this year's conference MC.**

**Our MC today has stepped in at the last minute replace Emily Rice struck by covid-19 get better soon.Emily.**

**He is no stranger to audiences however having worked in the television and corporate worlds for 30 years. A TV host, and producer of over a dozen shows, he has spent his career with the focus on entertainment front and centre. And if you've ever been to the recording of a TV show – you probably saw Michael in action as the loudest voice in the room as the warm-up guy.**

**He's also spent his fair share of time in hospital for one reason or another – and**

**he tells me he is very grateful for the work we do. Here now, just days after his 2<sup>nd</sup> booster – please welcome Michael Pope.**