

## **This is the race of our lives**

Over the weekend, we heard Deputy Prime Minister Michael McCormack say the vaccine rollout was “not a race.”

We respectfully disagree. It is a race — it is one of the most important races our nation has ever run.

As we witness yet another outbreak in Victoria, we are reminded of our nation’s vulnerabilities to further lockdowns. The current situation, which will continue until our population is vaccinated, is one where we alternate between periods of normalcy and periods of lockdown and border closure.

### **Australia’s Covid-19 gains at risk**

From the very start of the pandemic, Australia was a world leader in keeping Covid-19 under control. While we watched tragedy unfold across the world, Australia managed to keep its people safe — and to keep its people connected to jobs.

But those gains are now at serious risk due to a sense of complacency around the rollout of the vaccine. Being successful in the first phase of the pandemic has sadly not translated to success in the vaccine rollout phase.

The Federal Government took its time ordering its vaccines, it took its time approving its vaccines and it now appears to be taking its time rolling out its vaccines.

This has left just 2 per cent of Australians having received both doses of the vaccine so far. This compares with the United Kingdom, where around 37 per cent of its population has been fully vaccinated, and Israel, where the number stands at 59 per cent.

### **Why does it matter?**

An effective vaccine rollout matters on a human level and it matters for economic reasons. It will allow our people to reconnect with family stranded overseas. It will allow international students to safely live in Australia, giving our universities a vital boost. And it will allow our local businesses to employ more skilled migrant workers.

A successful vaccine rollout is fundamentally about protecting our nation’s long-term prosperity.

As other developed economies have shown, a rapid and safe rollout of the vaccine program has led to fewer people being treated for serious Covid-19 symptoms, allowing those economies to roll back restrictions.



The vaccines are safe, and they work. The latest data shows the risk of Covid-19 illness, including severe symptoms, reduces by around 90 per cent for those who are fully vaccinated. More than 1.8 billion doses have been administered across the world.

**We must end our complacency**

The Federal Government's refusal to set a vaccine timeline, and refusal to set a timeline for the safe reopening of our borders means the community has not felt the urgency to get vaccinated.

Now is the time to shed Australia's vaccine complacency. Our Government must be at the forefront of that change in our nation's thinking.

We are in the race of our lives.