

Community Statement

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The Empty Rhetoric of #AllInThisTogether

The Lebanese Muslim Association condemns the double standards regarding the application of restrictions observed across Sydney. The stark differences witnessed in the treatment of people in Southwest Sydney and those of the Eastern suburbs is completely unacceptable.

The fact that the NSW government was willing to put the entire metropolis of Sydney under greater risk by leaving the outbreak in Bondi unrestricted shows a lack of clarity and consistency in the strategy to effectively respond leaving us all vulnerable. The spread of COVID throughout Greater Sydney was then mitigated by giving Southwest Sydney the harshest restrictions, showing neglect of responsibility and unequal treatment of its citizens.

The empty rhetoric of togetherness was evident last weekend while clear non-compliance in Bondi and the beaches across Sydney were met with respectful conversations, non-compliance in Bankstown was treated with heavy-handed policing and paramedics. The different responses fuel long-term divisions across Sydney and continue to intensify heightened sensitivities around the over-securitisation and harsh policing of our diverse communities.

How is it possible that while this virus clearly doesn't discriminate; our policies, enforcements, approaches and treatment of people do? How is it possible that the selfishness of one group is written off as "this is the safest place to be at the present and people have been really good," while another group's is labelled as "other backgrounds don't seem to comply and don't really give consideration to what they do in terms of its impact on the rest of the community."

We know that tensions are building because of the inconsistencies. Instead of working with at-risk communities to establish a trusting relationship and create safety in a time of chaos, our diverse communities feel punished. The impact on people should be considered, and the question we must ask is: Are we really expecting people to continue to cooperate and willingly accept the disparity in treatment?

Samier Dandan, the President of the LMA stated "We expect an immediate countering of the divisive and empty rhetoric that we continue to hear. The government should be looking at the health of all communities in NSW and working towards ensuring that the safety and wellbeing of everyone is looked after in a fair and just manner to ensure harmony across all communities. This is how we tell communities that we are truly all in this together."

This double standard is unacceptable, and the current position and treatment of different LGAs is an absolute farce when we clearly prioritise the tans of some over the lives of others. The delineation of different rules for different LGAs whilst the entire community shares the same risk is a policy of discrimination. More transparency is required on behalf of the government to see what advice they are actually applying from NSW Health.

The LMA asks for an immediate balance in the treatment of people across Sydney and the elimination of the "us" and "them" narrative. We call for the removal of the 9pm curfew and for the same freedoms for outdoor recreation to be permitted statewide. This government must prioritise the mental wellbeing and equality of all citizens of NSW.

Our Community, Our Future