

## YOUNG SWEEPED UP IN NEW VIRUS WAVE

Alarming new statistics have revealed the toll of the second wave on our youngest Victorians, with more than 800 children under nine diagnosed with coronavirus since the pandemic began.

It comes as the state equalled its highest number of lives lost in a single day, with 19 deaths and 331 new cases.

Fourteen of the deaths were linked to aged-care outbreaks. The state's death toll now stands at 246.

New figures showed there were 366 active COVID-19 infections among children under nine and 736 more between ages 10 and 19.

The data also revealed a worrying trend for Victorians older than 90 who are among the most vulnerable to the virus.

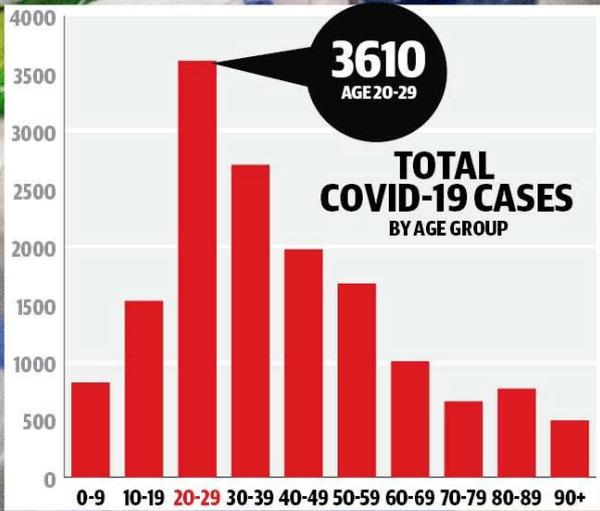
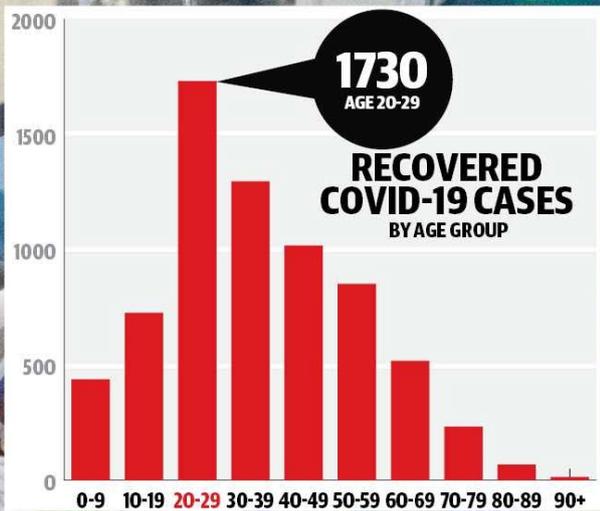
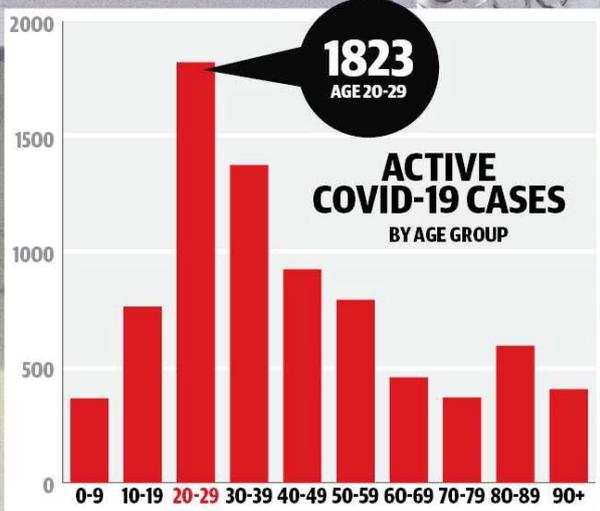
Of the 492 cases diagnosed in this age range, only 14 have recovered and 406 are still active.

Michael Gantier, a researcher in immunity at the Hudson Institute of Medical Research in Melbourne, warned the state's number of daily deaths could worsen before getting better.

He said it was fair to assume cases would rise "to about 40 deaths a day, for a few days," given the high number of cases in recent weeks.

"I was checking the dates where we saw 700 cases last week — and it's fair to say probably in the next seven days we'll likely see more deaths (because of this)," Dr Gantier said. "I'm very hopeful that the numbers are already going down and I think we just have to be resilient."

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Health Minister Jenny Mikakos on Tuesday said between 10 and 15 per cent of health workers who had contracted coronavirus had done so at work, with 1097 active cases in this category.

Mystery cases continued to grow, with 100 new cases taking the total to 2903.

Premier Daniel Andrews said community transmission was smaller than it had been in recent days.



Residents at a mobile COVID-19 testing station in Albanvale. Picture: Andrew Henshaw

He said transport showed movement around Melbourne had fallen dramatically since curfews were introduced.

“That data bears out that the strategy is working,” he said.

“We’ve got to keep seeing these numbers come down. We’ve got to keep seeing transmission at a much lower level.

“All of our experts remain convinced and very confident that as we’re just into the early parts of the second week, not even yet a full week, of many of stage four’s most significant changes, we will continue to see data that forms a trend and we’ll continue to see numbers coming down.

“Exactly how long that takes and to what the lowest number is we can get to, only time will tell.”

Mr Andrews urged Victorians to be patient as they worked through restrictions.

“It is a six-week strategy,” he said. “No one wants to be in these settings but the public health experts have told us, they’ve made it very clear, this is the only way we’ll get the numbers down.”

— *Kieran Rooney*