

Date: 6 January 2023

STAY SAFE AT TAMWORTH COUNTRY MUSIC FESTIVAL

Festival-goers are urged to stay safe and remain vigilant when Australia's largest music event, *Tamworth Country Music Festival*, kicks off on Friday 13 January.

Public health physician, Dr Kirsten Williamson, said staying COVID-safe remains a priority with case numbers still high in the community.

"With people out in crowds and moving between venues, there's greater risk of exposure to the COVID-19 virus," Dr Williamson said.

"If you're attending the festival and cannot safely socially distance, I encourage you to wear a mask indoors, practice good hand hygiene, participate in outdoor activities where possible and, if your vaccinations are not up to date, please get vaccinated – it offers important protection for you, your friends and the community.

"In particular, I urge people to please stay at home if you have cold or flu-like symptoms such as a runny nose, sore throat, cough or fever, and to go get tested."

Festival attendees are also reminded of the importance of staying sun-safe, well-hydrated and protected against mosquitoes.

"Ensure sunscreen, light long-sleeved clothing, hats and water bottles are all included in your festival checklist," Dr Williamson said.

"Hot weather can cause heat stress and heat stroke, and can make underlying health conditions worse. Reduce the impact of heat by avoiding being outside during the hottest part of the day, keeping well-hydrated with water, avoiding excessive alcohol, and looking after vulnerable friends and relatives."

All festival attendees are encouraged to actively protect themselves against mosquito bites to reduce the risk of Japanese encephalitis and other mosquito-borne diseases.

"You can reduce your chances of getting bitten by wearing light, loose-fitting long-sleeved shirts, long pants and covered footwear and socks, especially around dusk and dawn and regularly applying mosquito repellent to all areas of exposed skin – especially formulas that contain DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus," Dr Williamson said.

"It's also important to store your food safely when camping, otherwise gastro can be an unwelcome festival souvenir. Keep food cold, separate raw meat from other foods, and wash or sanitise your hands before preparing and eating food."

Tamworth Hospital has plans in place to manage any increase in presentations, however festival goesers and the community are reminded to keep the emergency departments for emergencies and those who need it the most.

If you have a minor illness or injury that does not need emergency treatment, St John Ambulance will have First Aid posts in the vicinity on Peel Street and Kable Avenue.

Anyone who requires urgent, higher-level care at Tamworth Hospital, for any condition, will be triaged and prioritised according to their clinical need.