Why Victoria's hard-won freedom is in jeopardy?

After months of sombre news, Victoria is deservedly celebrating a hard-won Christmas season. Although travel plans were disrupted, holiday talk, handshakes and hugs are back. Hygiene adherence is more relaxed and visitor sign-ins at shopping centres and malls are in sharp decline. Nonetheless, the growing NSW cluster is a staunch reminder of the dangers of falling into a false lull.

Little wander Sydney's Covid chaos is the last thing Victorians want to hear. Although the Victorian Government assures us the 13 active cases in the quarantine hotel system are under control, returning visitors from NSW combined with lax contact tracing are sounding an alarming knell.

Could Victoria's compliance collapse threaten our holiday season?

Despite the growing NSW cluster, many outlets in Victoria continue to falter on contactless check-ins. The lack of data on daily scans in the Victorian Government app and QR code system is also worrying. How can we get information on venues and contacts in real time?

Unfortunately, an alarming number of businesses in Victoria are ignoring the need to safeguard their patrons, are not signing in visitors and are not conducting contactless tracing. For some reason, the Victorian Government has also not released scan-in data on its own QR code and app.

The question remains why?

The truth is no one wants to talk doom-and-gloom anymore. The latest quarantine hotel figures after 52 doughnut days are not a popular discussion point.

In Victoria we continue to frequent shopping centres and business districts with or without visitor sign-in systems. Although manual registries were recently discouraged by the Victorian Government, too many outlets continue to work with pen and paper systems. Many patrons have quietly chosen to sign into the manual systems, or worse still, are completely ignoring the lack of contactless visitor sign-ins at a growing number of outlets.

Victoria's QR code adoption rate figures remain mysteriously unknown

After months of development the Victorian Government recently released its visitor check-in QR code system. The system is not mandatory and mysteriously, the adoption rate is not available to the public.

Privacy concerns present a major challenge in driving Government system adoption. This is not surprising, following the widespread criticism of operational failures and the lack of

transparency. [Research](#) conducted in the United States points out that privacy concerns and trust in public health authority could also be linked to low adoption rates.

Recent reports on quarantine breaches show a poor record of transparency and a lack of notifications on the public's potential exposure to the Coronavirus. A DHHS spokesman over a week ago said the "practice of quarantining secondary contacts as a precautionary measure" only began in October, three months after the quarantine debacle.

Although promoted as installation-free, the Government states on its website that if you don't have an up-to-date smartphone, you'll need to download an app to complete a check-in. Given the history of Government apps and the lack of transparency, we can't expect the public to rush to download another one.

The sharp decline in contactless sign-ins in Victoria is worrying

Many health organisations have repeatedly emphasized the importance of broad contactless visitor sign-ins across public outlets to curb the spread of Covid19. But if the Government app cannot be mandated, shouldn't we do more to ensure businesses and public venues are complying and helping the public avoid another Covid calamity?

Given the range of QR codes, apps and new contactless sensor technology, there is no shortage of ways to easily and quickly scan in or wave in the public into businesses, venues and locations.

Contactless visitor sign-in systems installed and governed in every business and outlet, can and should be a crucial tool for fighting the pandemic.

What we need this summer is a carefully coordinated strategy between Government, business organisations and local communities emphasizing focused, systematic, and local adoption.

Coupled with extensive testing capacity, contactless check-ins, at every business and outlet will give us a fighting chance of staving off another pandemic.

Let's secure this simple measure to protect our new-found freedom. After all, conducting contactless check-ins is a small price to pay to keep us healthy, safe and free during Christmas and 2021.

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