



JANET ALBRECHTSEN {P11}
'We don't do redemption very well any more'

LIFE & TIMES {P12}
NO SWEAT
Model David Gandy's new game



MAGAZINE INSIDE
OUR BEST 250 RESEARCHERS



Hit Covid fast: antiviral drugs to keep infected out of hospital

EXCLUSIVE
NATASHA ROBINSON
HEALTH EDITOR

The nation's top doctors predict new antiviral treatments to fight Covid-19 will make the disease significantly more manageable and ensure the hospital system can easily cope with any future spike in post-lockdown cases.

The Australian Medical Association and leading virus experts say antiviral drugs – still under re-

view in Australia – along with world-best vaccination rates could alleviate many cases of severe illness and allow some patients to avoid hospital altogether.

But one of the nation's top infectious diseases experts, Gail Matthews of Sydney's St Vincent's Hospital, is warning Australians they must continue to watch for symptoms and test early, as the drugs need to attack the virus within five days of infection.

AMA president Omar Khorshid said on Tuesday the antiviral drugs – set to be rolled out in the

US and Britain within months – have been "really exciting" in recent trials and could change the way hospitals approached Covid-19.

"It's possible that we could really turn this Covid-19 pandemic into a very manageable outbreak, with most people given protection by vaccines but for those not adequately protected, you've got effective treatments," Dr Khorshid said.

"Really, that could limit the impact of Covid-19 on Australia. Certainly if the clinical trial results of

Strict bans designed to lift state's job rate

Unvaccinated people will be banned from Queensland's bars, restaurants and stadiums under a last-ditch bid to lift lagging vaccination rates ahead of the border opening next month.

these drugs bear out then this could really change the way Covid-19 impacts our community so it's really, really exciting."

As Queensland prepares to open on December 17, Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk on Tuesday pleaded for people to get vaccinated as she unveiled a range of tough health orders, including banning all music and sports stars unless they have been fully jabbed.

Queensland venues including

nightclubs, theme parks and cinemas will open only to the fully vaccinated from that date, or sooner if the 80 per cent full vaccination target is reached.

It came as neighbouring NSW hit the 90 per cent mark for double-vaccinated adults.

FULL REPORT P5

molnupiravir, reduced the risk of hospitalisation or death from Covid-19 by 50 per cent in clinical trials. Pfizer's drug, PF-07321332/ritonavir reduced hospitalisations and death by 89 per cent in interim analysis when administered within three days of symptom onset.

Another injectable monoclonal antibody treatment, sotrovimab, is being used in hospitals around the country and is already reducing the incidence of severe disease.

MSD and its partner Ridgeback Biotherapeutics intend to produce 10 million courses of molnupiravir

by the end of this year, with more doses expected in 2022. The US has already agreed to a deal for 17 million courses and Britain plans to roll out the drug this month.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration in Australia has granted molnupiravir a provisional determination to fast-track its approval, which is expected to be granted early in January. The Federal government

Continued on Page 5

MORE REPORTS P5

■ BID TO FAST-TRACK LOW-EMISSIONS TECHNOLOGIES ■ COALITION STRATEGY SETS UP CLASH WITH LABOR

PM drives \$1bn tech fund

GEOFF CHAMBERS
CHIEF POLITICAL
CORRESPONDENT

Scott Morrison will launch a \$1bn investment fund to fast-track low-emissions technologies including carbon capture and storage and methane-reducing livestock feed, setting up a pre-election clash with Anthony Albanese over the government's plan for net-zero emissions by 2050.

The low-emissions technology commercialisation fund will require legislation to pump \$500m of seed capital into the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and the government is considering tying it to its stalled Grid Reliability Fund in a bid to wedge Labor months out from the election.

The Prime Minister said the fund, which would make venture capital investments in Australian start-ups and businesses and was expected to earn a positive return for taxpayers, would target firms struggling to access finance.

"We are backing Australian businesses by creating an environment for their successful ideas to thrive, in contrast to Labor's approach to always wanting to tax success," Mr Morrison said.

"Our plan to reach net zero by 2050 is an Australian one that's focused on technology not taxes and this fund backs in Australian companies to find new solutions."

"Australia can become a world leader in creating low-emissions technology that is both affordable and scalable, helping get emissions down while creating jobs."

The CEFC low-emissions technology fund will be anchored by \$500m in seed capital from the government and \$500m raised from the private sector. The fund will make venture capital investments, not grants nor loans, in Australian start-ups and businesses.

Labor has voted seven times in parliament against moves to expand the mandate of the Australian Renewable Energy Agency to back technologies such as carbon capture and storage and opposes the Grid Reliability Fund.

Senior government sources said that if Labor blocked the Low Emissions Technology and Grid Reliability funds, it would stand in the way of \$1.5bn of new money to support low-emissions technologies and transmission for the uptake of renewables.

Opposition climate change spokesman Chris Bowen said on Sunday Labor would not support using ARENA and the CEFC to fund carbon capture and storage "because that's diverting money away from renewable-energy installations".

Mr Bowen said the government was putting "too much store in

Electric dream to create a \$2bn budget pothole

EXCLUSIVE

GREG BROWN
GEOFF CHAMBERS

Scott Morrison's electric car policy will punch a \$2bn hole each year in the federal budget by 2030, prompting demands from the nation's peak automobile body for the government to explain how the sharp reduction in fuel excise revenue will be offset.

With the Prime Minister predicting there would be 1.7 million electric cars on the road by 2030, the Australian Automobile Association said fuel excise revenue would drop from \$13bn a year to below \$11bn. AAA managing director Michael Bradley said a failure to offset the reductions would lead to lower spending on roads and other transport infrastructure.

"Genuine tax reform is needed to ensure revenue is in future collected from all the different vehicles on our roads," he said. "We need a sustainable revenue model to fund land transport into the future."

The strategy did not outline measures to offset the reduction in revenue, stating instead a "strong economy" would make up for the shortfall.

FULL REPORT P7
EDITORIAL P10

carbon capture" and was using it as "an excuse to avoid reducing emissions in other ways".

Mr Morrison, who is campaigning in marginal and target electorates in Victoria this week, will step up attacks on Labor's climate change record on Wednesday after pushing back against criticism of the government's electric vehicle strategy, which will accelerate the rollout of charging and hydrogen-refuelling stations to support 1.7 million vehicles on Australian roads by 2030.

Launching the strategy on Tuesday alongside Liberal MP Katie Allen, who holds the marginal inner-Melbourne seat of Higgins, Mr Morrison said his electric vehicle plan allowed Australians to make their own choices.

Mr Morrison, who ahead of the 2019 election claimed Bill Shorten's policy for electric vehicles to make up to 50 per cent of new car sales by 2030 would "end the

Continued on Page 7

MORE REPORTS P8
PAUL KELLY P11



Above, Scott Morrison serves spring rolls in Box Hill; right, a short back and sides in Malvern; and, left, at the Toyota Hydrogen Centre
DAVID GERAGHTY



Election entree: leaders cut to campaign chase

OLIVIA CAISLEY
DENNIS SHANAHAN

Scott Morrison had a hair cut, made spring rolls in Box Hill and turned up at Toyota's Altona plant spruiking an electric car plan – all in the full glare of the nation's media.

Now the nation straps itself in for a months-long run-up to an

election most likely in May. After months of lockdowns in NSW and Victoria – and weeks of quarantine at The Lodge after returning from overseas trips – the Prime Minister is back among the voters and taking the national temperature.

Coalition insiders also say he is using the run-up to Christmas to highlight the "tangible benefits" of the policies he took to the

Glasgow climate change summit. Those policies remove the climate change "baracle" and allow the Prime Minister to focus next year on the Coalition's electoral strength – the economy.

A 2022 election is now a certainty. While the Prime Minister has the right to call an election, either a House of Representatives and half-Senate or double-dissolution election, the Constitution

and the Commonwealth Electoral Act provide ground rules.

A federal election must be held on a Saturday and there must be a formal campaign after the issue of the writs for an election of 33 days.

This means an election can no longer be called for December 11, leaving only December 18 this year for an election. But December 18 would be the closest election to Christmas Day since the

polls conducted during the Spanish flu 100 years ago and the Great Depression 90 years ago.

Senior government sources now expect the Prime Minister to call an election for May following an early budget in April, a repeat of the scenario Mr Morrison used to defeat Bill Shorten in 2019.

With unemployment expected to dip to 4 per cent and a strong
Continued on Page 7

Somyurek admits to unethical behaviour

REMY VARGA
RACHEL BAXENDALE

Former Victorian powerbroker Adem Somyurek has admitted his behaviour was unethical, telling an anti-corruption inquiry he should be condemned in the strongest possible terms as he laid bare the factional machinations of the state Labor Party.

The upper house MP admitted to organising taxpayer-funded jobs for factional reasons, allowing electoral office staff to complete Labor Party work and branch stacking.

Mr Somyurek said his conduct – in breach of party rules – was part of the party culture and said he had not considered that paying for membership renewals constituted branch stacking.

"It was so endemic in the culture of the Labor Party that I explained to you yesterday what I was – the culture in which I was initiated into and socialised into," he told the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission.

"But we thought we were actually doing well in not, we would say, branch stacking for 20 years, staying away from the practice."

On Tuesday, Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews refused to confirm or deny earlier allegations made by Mr Somyurek that he dismissed concerns over the Red Shirt rort and that the pair had hatched a factional peace deal to end stacking in the early 2000s.

"My job does not include trampling all over an independent process, and it certainly does not include replicating, with you good people, exactly the process that's ongoing now," he said.

"IBAC's doing its job and we should all let it continue that."

Mr Somyurek said he lost perspective in 2020 as he waged war against the Socialist Left in Melbourne's southeast, which he said was triggered by aggressive recruiting by the staff of federal Labor MP Julian Hill.

He said he became less concerned by things such as
Continued on Page 2

MORE REPORTS P2
EDITORIAL P10



9 771038 876318

ADVERTISEMENT

SOLD OUT SOLD OUT SOLD OUT

We can never trust the Liberals, Labor or Greens Again!

Join the United Australia Party – go to unitedaustraliaparty.org.au



