

'Go hard, go early' approach to COVID-19 the right move

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A new study published today highlights the importance of a 'go hard, go early,' strategy when it comes to responding to growing outbreaks of COVID-19 in Australia.

According to the lead author, Professor Tom Kompas at the University of Melbourne, Victoria's current snap [lockdown](#) is the correct approach.

"Our work shows that what Victoria is currently doing, with its 'circuit-breaker' lockdown is exactly the right thing to do," Professor Kompas said.

"An uncontrolled spread of COVID, especially with newer, more aggressive strains, would be disastrous for Australia.

"Elimination of community spread in Australia is best for both health and economy outcomes. There is no question about this."

The study evaluated three scenarios from Australia's 'first wave' of COVID-19 in the first half of 2020 including an early and a delayed COVID-19 suppression scenario.

For each scenario, public health and [economic costs](#) were estimated. Co-author Professor Quentin Grafton from The Australian National University said: "Our study estimated [costs](#) from an early 8-week national lockdown in Australia were large, at \$52 billion, or about three percent of GDP, but the costs of a much-delayed lockdown were many times greater and included a much greater loss of life.

"If other high-income countries had imposed effective suppression measures earlier, and especially supervised quarantine for all arrivals, they would have had lower COVID-19 fatalities and economy costs."

In a stark comparison between Australia's lockdown strategy with the United Kingdom (UK), Professor Grafton said: "The UK has lost 128,000 lives to COVID-19 and in 2020 suffered its biggest annual decline, 9.9 percent, in GDP in over 300 years. By comparison, Australia's GDP is now higher than it was just before the pandemic and

has, to date, suffered less than 1,000 fatalities."

"Australia's national lockdown that began in March 2020 generated a very large economic payoff relative to alternatives of delayed suppression measures or unmitigated spread of COVID-19. For that, all Australians should be grateful."

The study has been published in *PLOS ONE*.

More information: Tom Kompas et al, Health and economic costs of early and delayed suppression and the unmitigated spread of COVID-19: The case of Australia, *PLOS ONE* (2021). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0252400](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0252400)

Provided by Australian National University

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