Dear ski resort residents,

You may have already seen the attached media release referencing the positive SARS-CoV-2 virus detected in the sewage treatment plant at Perisher. In response all the COVID clinics have increased opening times to encourage testing at the following locations:

* Perisher Clinic, NSW National Parks Building Perisher Valley, will operate extended hours from 9:30am – 2pm daily until further notice.
* Jindabyne Clinic will operate with double capacity at the new, larger location at HealthOne Car park, 5 Thredbo Terrace, Jindabyne from 9am – 4pm daily until further notice.
* Cooma Clinic at the Cooma Hospital & Health Service, will have extra swabbing capacity during normal hours of 9am – 5pm daily until further notice.
* Thredbo Clinic, Friday Drive behind the Information Centre, also remains open 9:30am – 2pm daily until further notice.

**Below are some key dot points to note:**

**COVID in Sewage**

* SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 is just one of many viruses present in sewage
* Sewage also contains detergents and other substances that inactivate (kill) SARS-CoV-2 before it reaches the sewage treatment plant
* SARS-CoV-2 is easily inactivated (killed) by usual sewage treatment processes, including chlorine and ultraviolet (UV) disinfection
* Sewage is treated before discharge to the environment using UV disinfection, this is regulated by the NSW EPA.

**Drinking Water**

* The drinking water is safe to drink
* Drinking water is treated before being delivered to your tap
* Drinking water treatment is designed to inactivate (kill) or remove a range of microorganism, including viruses, bacteria and protozoa.
* Drinking treatment is designed and operated to inactivate (kill) or remove the most hardy microorganisms.
* SARS-CoV-2 is not a hardy virus in the environment.
* No additional or modified treatment is required beyond the current ‘business as usual’ drinking water treatment .

**The Sewage Surveillance Research Program**

* This research program detects viral fragments of SARS-CoV-2, not infectious viruses.
* The aim of the sewage surveillance research program is to test untreated sewage for fragments of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that can be integrated with health data for COVID-19 to support NSW Health’s response.
* Viral fragments may be shed into sewage from stools for a number of weeks by persons infected with SARS-CoV-2, and shedding can extend beyond the infectious period.
* Viral fragments can also enter the sewer when washed off hands and body via sinks and showers
* Sampling is being undertaken in a number of regional and metropolitan areas under this research program.

**Other points that may be useful**

* Exposure to all pathogens in the workplace and in wastewater should be managed by ‘business as usual’ hygiene practices such as using appropriate personal protective equipment and good handwashing.