

Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier



Sunday, 19 July 2020

FACE COVERINGS MANDATORY FOR MELBOURNE AND MITCHELL SHIRE

People living in metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire will now be required to wear a face covering when leaving home for one of the four reasons, following a concerning increase in coronavirus cases in recent days.

Based on the latest advice from the Chief Health Officer, we're urging Victorians: just as you remember to take your keys when you leave the house, you need to remember to take something to cover your face – to help keep you and our community safe.

To give people time to purchase or make a face covering, this new rule won't be enforced until after 11.59pm on Wednesday 22 July – but for those who can, please start wearing yours immediately. The fine for not wearing a face covering will be \$200.

There will be some reasons not to wear a face covering. For example, those who have a medical reason, kids under 12 years of age, those who have a professional reason or if it's just not practical, like when running – however you will still be expected to carry your face covering at all times to wear when you can.

In our schools, that'll mean teachers don't have to wear a face covering while teaching – but students attending for VCE, VCAL or for onsite supervision will, while everyone will be expected to wear one on the way to and from school.

Otherwise, if you're leaving your home for one of the four reasons, you need to cover your face. The Government will work with Victorian industry and unions to provide advice to workplaces in the coming days.

Face coverings in regional Victoria continue to be recommended in situations where maintaining 1.5 metres distance is not possible – however regional Victorians will have to wear a mask when visiting metropolitan Melbourne or Mitchell Shire for one of the permitted reasons.

The State of Emergency will also be extended until 11.59pm on 16 August 2020, allowing for the enforcement of this direction and other vital public health directions from the Chief Health Officer.

While we've recently seen a decrease in the number of cases being spread between families, the majority of our outbreaks are now coming from settings where people are working closely together.

To address this increase, an inspection and enforcement blitz will be carried out in workplaces across the state. WorkSafe, Emergency Management Victoria and Victoria Police will focus on at-risk workplaces, including distribution centres, call centres and meat processing centres.

And with a spike in cases in aged care settings, the Victorian Government has been working closely with the Commonwealth on a range of measures, ensuring care workers are equipped to prevent the spread of coronavirus while providing quality care.

As the risk of transmission in aged care and health care settings remains high, from 22 July, visitation will be restricted to those defined as carers only, with a limit of one hour per day. And like previous asymptomatic staff testing blitzes, aged care staff will be able to access free testing, even if they don't have symptoms.

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The Government will work closely with hospitals and care providers in the coming days to ensure these changes are made in a careful and sensitive way to support the needs of patients and residents.

The Victorian Government's one-off \$1500 worker support payment is still available to support Victorian workers, including those in aged care, who have been instructed to stay home because they've had a positive test or need to self-isolate as a close contact.

The Government has also been made aware of a number of people deliberately moving their weddings from Melbourne to regional Victoria in order to avoid restrictions. Directions will be updated to send a clear message: we are facing a pandemic and this is not the time for parties – this includes traveling to regional Victoria to attend one.

As always, the Government will continue to monitor data over the next fortnight. Compliance – and the rate of community transmission – will decide what we do next, and whether we move to Stage 4 restrictions.

For information about coronavirus or to find your nearest testing site, visit coronavirus.vic.gov.au or call 1800 675 398.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

"I understand this is a big shift and that not being able to see each other's faces might be confronting. But this virus is incredibly infectious – and this is about keeping people safe."

"By covering our faces, we're protecting ourselves, our families and every single Victorian. So please – just as you remember your house keys, please remember something to cover your face."

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos

"We've extended the State of Emergency because we know our coronavirus fight is far from over."

"That includes the tough decision to introduce further visitation restrictions to healthcare and aged care settings. We know this will be difficult for Victorian families, but ultimately this is about keeping the people we love safe."

Quotes attributable to Chief Health Officer Professor Brett Sutton

"The best way you can help keep community transmission low is by sticking to the coronavirus restrictions, keeping your distance and wearing a face covering whenever you leave home."

"By covering my face, I'm helping to keep you safe – and by covering your face, you're helping to keep every Victorian safe."