

Statement

The Hon Dan Andrews MP
Premier



Tuesday, 15 September 2020

STATEMENT FROM THE PREMIER

Last week, we released our roadmap towards reopening.

Those safe, steady and sustainable steps that will see us all the way to COVID Normal.

Importantly, these steps are guided by clear targets – giving Victorians greater insight into our progress, and ensuring that when it comes to taking our next step forward, we can do so confidently.

Thanks to the efforts of every Victorian, we've reached our very first target.

Having reached a 14-day average of 3.6 and with no mystery cases, regional Victoria has reached the necessary "trigger point" in our roadmap – meaning our public health experts have advised that we can take this next step.

I can announce, that from 11:59pm tomorrow, regional communities will progress to the Third Step of our reopening roadmap.

Today is testament to the determination of regional Victorians. A determination to not only get these numbers low – but to keep them low.

It's also good news for every Victorian, wherever they live.

Because it shows – in very real terms – the strategy is working. The hard work of all Victorians is paying off.

Today shows that slowly and surely, we can – we will – drive this thing down.

What that means is a number of changes to how regional Victorians live and work.

As we've outlined under the roadmap, "household bubbles" will now be a possibility.

That means, your household can choose one other household to be in a bubble. You can visit them in their home. They can visit you in your home – with up to a total of five visitors.

I understand some people will likely want more and sooner. But the bubble arrangement means people can begin to visit each other at home slowly, cautiously – so that if the worst were to happen, we can effectively track and trace the spread of the virus.

If you are catching up with friends and family, we encourage you to do it outside. All the latest evidence says being outdoors reduces the risk. To that end, people will be able to gather in groups of ten in outdoor public places, without a limit on the number of households.

Outdoor contact and non-contact sport will begin for regional Victorians aged 18 and under, as well as outdoor non-contact sport for adults. And there'll be a staged return to onsite learning for all regional students in the first two weeks of Term Four.

The numbers for weddings and funerals will increase, and religious gatherings can happen outdoors with up to ten people.

Hospitality businesses will be able to serve patrons outdoors, with a cap of 50 seated patrons per venue, and an updated 'two square metre' density limit in place.

Indoors, venues can open with a cap of 10 seated customers per space – with up to two spaces per venue – and in line with the existing ‘four square metre’ density rule.

Tables must be spaced at least 1.5m apart, cleaned after every customer and the details of all patrons must be kept.

These arrangements will also pave the way for Melbourne’s return to dining – for when we too can safely take that next step.

Beauty and personal care services will also be available with a face covering. Outdoor events like a play in the park or an open-air cinema can take place, in accordance with other restrictions.

Regional real estate agents will be able to hold auctions outdoors with up to ten people.

And travel can resume for regional Victorians holidaying anywhere in regional Victoria.

All businesses across Victoria – regional and in Melbourne – will also be required to have a COVIDSafe Plan, enforceable from 28 September.

I want to remind Victorians, in every corner of the state, that even as the rules change, the need to follow them doesn’t.

I know sometimes that’s tedious. It’s frustrating. It’s boring. I promise, I’m right there with you.

But we shouldn’t lose sight that the rules are there to keep us safe – and keep us on-track for opening.

That’s why I’m urging Melburnians, please – don’t try to travel into regional communities unless it’s for one of those permitted reasons.

Because just as today’s success belongs to regional Victorians, it belongs to you too.

And together, we’ve come so far, given so much, taking a backwards step is the last thing we want to do.

We all have to jealously protect those low numbers – and jealously protect our path towards a full reopening across the whole of our state.

To every Victorian: we are achieving amazing things.

With kindness and courage and commitment – with big and small sacrifices – we are beating this thing.

And with a 14-day average of 52.9, I can confirm Melbourne is on track to reach the Second Step of reopening by 28 September.

We are almost there.

Today is proof positive that with purpose and patience, we can see this thing through.

And when we do, we can find a COVID Normal where life looks close to how we remember it.

We can do this.