

Statement

The Hon Dan Andrews MP
Premier



Sunday, 18 October 2020

STATEMENT FROM THE PREMIER

There's been plenty said about how challenging 2020 has been.

And it's true. This year has asked more of us – taken more from us – than any year, ever.

But 2020 has also proven, without doubt, the incredible courage of Victorians.

We have found it in ourselves to stay the course. And as a state – millions strong – we are defeating this virus.

Other places around the world have not been so successful.

Back in August and at our peak, we reported 725 daily cases. At the same time, the UK recorded 891.

Today, as Victoria records two new cases, the UK hit 16,171. And as we continue easing our restrictions – they are being forced to increase theirs.

We are seeing states and cities, not so different from our own, overwhelmed by their second wave.

Doctors and nurses being asked to decide which of their patients are most worthy of their care.

And communities – entire countries – confronting the reality that this will be “normal” until there is a vaccine.

We have escaped that awful eventuality. With modest acts of greatness and kindness, we have endured this – together.

Today, and on the strength of that success, we've been able to progress a number of changes.

I know these changes can't be absolutely everything everyone wants. But they are the steps we can safely take that will make life a little bit easier.

From 11:59pm tonight, the five-kilometre limit for exercise and shopping will be extended to 25 kilometres. The two-hour time limit for exercise and socialising will also fall away.

Outdoor sports settings like tennis courts, golf courses and skateparks will be able to reopen.

All allied health professionals currently operating will be able to resume routine face-to-face care.

Outdoor real estate auctions will be able to take place with up to 10 people, plus the required staff.

And in good news for those sizing up the scissors or cautiously contemplating a buzzcut – hairdressers will be able to open, with strict safety protocols in place.

From tonight, groups of up to ten people from two households will also be able to gather in outdoor public places. That could be for exercise – or a picnic in the park.

I know some people will reasonably ask why it's limited to two households – and not five or ten. But by limiting the number of households, we're limiting any potential spread of the virus.

We're also able to get thousands more Victorians back to work – particularly those who work outside. That includes tradies undertaking outdoor maintenance and repair work, mobile pet groomers and photographers.

These are the changes we can safely make from tonight.

We need to wait just a bit longer – until 11:59pm on 1 November – to take the rest of the Third Step that will see retail, hospitality and personal care services open again.

This is a timeline that is based on the current advice of our public health team.

But if we continue to track well on the most important indicators – case averages, mystery cases, test numbers and the number of days people wait before they get tested – we may be in a position to move sooner.

These indicators help tell us the story that sits behind a case – and understand how we can safely make our next moves.

My commitment to Melburnians: we'll review this data each and every day this week and when we get to next weekend, if we can move any earlier and do it safely, we will.

When we do reach the Third Step it will also mean we move from “stay home” to “stay safe” – with no restrictions on the reasons to leave home.

Under this step, all remaining retail will open. Restaurants, cafes and pubs will open. And personal and beauty services will be able to offer treatments to clients – as long as a face mask can be worn.

These businesses will be able to have staff onsite for a ‘dark opening’ from 28 October, giving them time to prepare to open their doors to the public.

We'll also be able to go a bit further on home visits too – allowing households to have two people and their dependents visit their home once per day.

The other aspects of our roadmap – from accommodation to outdoor sport – will also be introduced.

I know there'll be plenty of people who want to know when they can head to regional Victoria.

And unfortunately, for now, that's off the cards. As we've seen this week, this virus is wildly infectious – and we all need to help protect the hard-won gains of our regional communities.

Because we are doing so well in regional Victoria, we're able to make a few changes there too.

From tonight, regional libraries and toy libraries will be able to open to a maximum of 20 people indoors.

People will be able to hold outdoor religious gatherings with up to 20 people – and 50 from 1 November.

And in good news for our regional hospitality businesses, they'll be able to host up to 40 customers indoors and up to 70 outdoors from 11:59pm tonight.

Staying safe is more important than ever. So please, keep wearing a mask, keep maintaining your distance – and if you feel sick, get tested and stay home.

I understand that for some these changes won't be enough. They'll want more – and they'll want it sooner.

But the whole way through this, we have been guided by our public health experts and their advice.

None of us ever want to do this again.

We have come too far – sacrificed too much – to give up now. We are so close.

These are the safe, steady steps that will see us out of this – and see us through to the other side.

We can do this.