

Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier



Wednesday, 21 October 2020

PLANNING EXEMPTIONS SMOOTH THE WAY FOR OUTDOOR DINING

The Victorian Government is ensuring Melbourne's hospitality sector can make a smooth transition to outdoor dining by streamlining planning approvals.

Minister for Planning Richard Wynne today announced that existing pubs, restaurants, cafes and other food and drink venues can use existing outdoor spaces, as well as nearby parks and public land to accommodate and serve patrons without the need for a planning permit.

The exemptions, to be made under planning amendment VC139 and published in the government gazette later today, will allow venues to capitalise on open spaces including streets, footpaths and carparks to add to venue capacity while restrictions reduce the number of patrons allowed for indoor dining.

Businesses covered by the exemptions include restaurants, cafes, bars, hotels, function and reception centres and wineries.

Melbourne's hospitality businesses are currently scheduled to re-open from 11:59pm on 1 November with predominantly outdoor seated service but if case numbers stay low and public health advice says we can move earlier, we will.

As that step nears and with regional hospitality businesses now able to expand to up to 70 patrons outside, new planning exemptions will support the hospitality industry by enabling businesses to better plan and use their own land and expand onto adjoining land to accommodate more patrons while still adhering to distancing guidelines.

The new provisions also provide exemptions from the need to obtain planning permits for construction of temporary buildings, the provision of car parking, and the sale and consumption of liquor – subject to conditions.

The exemptions apply to the conditions on existing planning permits, giving businesses more flexibility about how they use their own land in order to comply with public health guidelines.

The exemptions will apply while Victoria remains under a State of Emergency, and for 12 months after the State of Emergency has been lifted. Liquor licence, public health matters and public land manager requirements may still need to be met along with council administered local laws.

The turnaround for temporary liquor license applications has also been fast-tracked from up to eight weeks down to just three business days.

These changes build on the \$187.5 million package announced in September to support Victoria's hospitality industry to reopen safely, including grants to help set up new outdoor dining areas.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

"Our world-famous restaurants and food scene are a vital part of Melbourne and Victoria, and we all want to see them bounce back and welcome back patrons in a safe way."

"The move to more outdoor drinking and dining has the potential to change our city and our state for the better and open up exciting new experiences – not just for this summer, but for every summer."

Quote attributable to Minister for Planning Richard Wynne

"We understand this has been an incredibly challenging time for our hospitality venues and these exemptions will help to make sure the transition to COVID safe dining is as easy as possible."

For information about coronavirus visit coronavirus.vic.gov.au or call 1800 675 398.