

Statement

The Hon Dan Andrews MP
Premier



Monday, 26 October 2020

STATEMENT FROM THE PREMIER

Zero.

The last time Victoria had zero cases was 9 June, 139 days ago.

Even more incredibly, it's zero cases off the back of a huge testing drive.

Over the course of this weekend, we asked Victorians living in our northern suburbs to get tested. They did just that.

In 24 hours, we have been able to process an additional 14,024 tests – 3196 of them from these communities. This morning we've processed an extra 1157.

And not a single new case has been found.

I want to thank everyone who did the right thing by their community and our state in getting tested. I also want to thank the nurses, lab technicians, collectors, couriers – everyone who has been working around the clock to process these tests.

Because of that effort, we've been able to get the results faster than we thought. These results give us confidence – confidence that even if we do identify positive cases in any further tests – we are firmly on top of this virus.

It's why today I can confirm what we've long waited for: Melbourne will move out of lockdown and into the Third Step. Before we get to the bit that almost everyone will be waiting for, an ask:

As we take these steady steps towards reopening, the message remains the same: please, stay safe. And if you have symptoms, you must get tested.

Under the Third Step, and from 11:59pm on Tuesday, Melbourne will move from "stay home" to "stay safe", with no more restrictions on the reasons to leave home.

The 25-kilometre limit though, will remain in place. I know it's frustrating, but this is about making sure that even as we ease restrictions, we're limiting the virus's ability to travel.

It's why the border between regional Victoria and Melbourne will also remain in place – for just a bit longer.

Under the Third Step, Melbourne's cafes, restaurants and pubs can reopen. Outdoors with a limit of up to 50, indoors up to 20. Density limits, record keeping and COVIDSafe Plans also apply.

Remaining retail will also open. Beauty and personal care services can resume. And for those businesses who need to get ready for their reopening – staff will be able to attend onsite straight away.

Outdoor contact sport for those aged 18 and under will also begin again – so too can non-contact sport for adults. PT, fitness and dance classes can also be held outdoors with up to ten people, and the number of people at outdoor pools can increase to 50, subject to density limits.

Libraries and community venues will be able to open for outdoor events. Outdoor entertainment venues can also begin hosting visitors.

And faith communities will be able to meet for outdoor religious ceremonies with up to 20 people, in addition to those required for the service. Indoor services can be held with up to 10.

Weddings will increase to ten people, and funerals up to 20.

Workplaces will no longer need to be on the permitted work list to open and the ability to work will change to “if you can work from home you must work from home”.

While the boundary is in place, work permits will still be required for workers from Melbourne travelling into regional Victoria – and vice versa.

I know the thing many people are missing is having people over to visit – but as we’ve seen, this virus is at its most dangerous when we’re indoors and relaxed and comfortable.

It’s why we’re going to take the next 24 hours to understand how we might be able to make this work – safely – and I’ll have more to say about this tomorrow.

From 8 November, and if we can continue driving case numbers down, the 25km limit will come off and Melbourne will be able to meet regional Victoria at the same level.

That means the same eased restrictions that apply to regional Victoria will also apply to Melbourne.

The capacity of pubs and restaurants will increase, with up to 40 inside and 70 outside.

Religious gatherings will expand with up to 20 people and a faith leader indoors, and 50 outside.

Gyms and indoor fitness will be able to reopen – with some strict safety precautions in place.

And because Melburnians will have well and truly earned a holiday, accommodation will also reopen.

The border between the city and the rest of our state will also fall away.

I know personally – deeply – just how much this will mean for thousands of Victorians who haven’t been able to see loved ones for far too long.

It will mean families are whole again. Our state is whole again.

I understand there’ll be questions, “what about X?” or “when can I do Y?”. And I promise, we’ll also have an update on 8 November on the timelines and thresholds for taking the Last Step.

We want to reach COVID Normal by Christmas and right now, we’re on track to do that.

It’s why we’ve got to keep going – all of us. Understanding that even though restrictions may ease, our personal responsibility in all this doesn’t.

We have come so far and given so much.

Getting here – and staying here – relies on the efforts of every Victorian.

Keep going.