

Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier



Saturday, 21 August 2021

LOCKDOWN ACROSS REGIONAL VICTORIA TO KEEP US SAFE

Due to the ongoing level of community transmission, the large number of mystery cases and a surge of new cases and exposures sites outside of metropolitan Melbourne, regional Victoria will enter lockdown from 1pm today. Additionally, further measures will be implemented to protect children across the entire state, as the number of infections amongst kids continues to rise.

The number of coronavirus cases who have been infectious out in the community over the last few days and the number of mystery cases emerging in different areas across Victoria is extremely concerning. It shows the incredible speed at which this Delta variant is spreading.

With the number of positive cases this high and so many Victorians still to be vaccinated, we cannot afford to let this virus run free – our hospital system would be overrun, our frontline staff would be placed under huge pressure and quite simply, people will die.

We need to slow the spread of the virus and get in front of this outbreak. That is why Victoria's Chief Health Officer has declared that all metropolitan Melbourne restrictions – except for the curfew – will be implemented across regional Victoria from 1pm today until 11.59pm Thursday, 2 September.

This means that in regional Victoria there will be only five reasons to leave your home: to get the food and the supplies you need, to exercise for up to two hours no more than 5km from your home, for care or caregiving, authorised work or education if you can't do it from home, or to get vaccinated at the nearest possible location.

Face masks will still be mandatory outdoors and indoors (not at home) unless an exception applies – this includes all workplaces, and secondary schools. To give industry time to adjust, workforce permits will be required to leave the house for authorised work from 11.59pm Monday 23 August. Workforce limits apply to the construction industry from 1pm today, however we will be engaging with industry about safely reducing staff numbers as they secure sites.

Playgrounds, basketball hoops, skate parks and outdoor exercise equipment will be closed. Masks will also not be able to be removed to drink alcoholic beverages. Exercise will be limited to just one other person, plus dependants if they can't be left at home. And more than ever, it's so important people do not have visitors to the home.

The age demographic of this outbreak is very different to what we've seen before, with around 80 per cent of our active cases aged below 40 and around 25 per cent under the age of nine. The cases currently in hospital include people in their 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s – showing just how serious this virus can be for young people as well.

Because of high rate of transmission in young people and the number of childcare centres now designated as exposure sites, all childcare centres across Victoria will be closed except to children whose parents are authorised workers and cannot be supervised at home. Vulnerable children can still attend. A permit system will apply, and further details will be available soon.

Victoria's public health team are also strongly recommending that primary school aged children, when they are not at home, also wear a mask as an extra precaution against this virus.

Further, changes will be made to metropolitan businesses operating in high-risk industries – like abattoirs, meat, poultry and seafood processing – with additional obligations such as workforce limits and mandatory surveillance testing to be implemented.

For more information call the coronavirus hotline on 1800 675 398 or visit coronavirus.vic.gov.au.

Getting vaccinated is our way out of this pandemic. That's why the Victorian Government is aiming to administer 1 million doses in five weeks – so far, we've delivered more than 168,000 doses in 5 days.

There are more than 390,000 COVID-19 vaccine appointments available over the next four weeks and we're asking all eligible Victorians to book theirs today – do not wait.

While the Commonwealth have advised they will be opening Pfizer eligibility to over 18s from 30 August, we strongly suggest that Victorians who have already booked in for their Astra Zeneca vaccine, do not cancel that appointment. The best vaccine you can get is the one that you can get today.

If you have any questions or concerns you can talk to a GP, pharmacist or to a senior and experienced immuniser at our state-run sites.

All Victorians are encouraged where possible to book their vaccination appointment by visiting portal.cvms.vic.gov.au or by phoning the Coronavirus hotline on 1800 675 398.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

"This is not where we wanted to be as a community. It's not a decision we wanted to make after Victorians have sacrificed so much, but we have no other option. Cases need to be lower and vaccination rates need to be higher.

"There's a million things that we miss about life before the pandemic and a million things we're looking forward to doing again once we're through this outbreak – each of those is a reason to get vaccinated."

Quote attributable Minister for Health Martin Foley

"We know having childcare centres closed will be difficult for parents who are already juggling so much but with so many young children in this outbreak contracting the virus, we need to do more to protect them and their families."