

Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier



Wednesday, 8 September 2021

CORONAVIRUS RESTRICTIONS TO LIFT FOR REGIONAL VICTORIA

Lockdown restrictions will be lifted in regional Victoria from tomorrow night, following advice from Victoria's Chief Health Officer.

Victorians continue to do an incredible job keeping each other safe and while metropolitan Melbourne and Shepparton are still managing serious outbreaks, case numbers in the rest of regional Victoria have remained low and contained which gives us options to ease restrictions.

Because of this, from 11.59pm on Thursday 9 September, the five reasons to leave the home will be removed in regional Victoria, except for Greater Shepparton. There will be no limit on the distance regional Victorians can travel from home – other than restrictions on entry to metropolitan Melbourne.

The Authorised Worker list will no longer apply in the regions, meaning most businesses and venues can reopen with capacity and density limits. Regional Victorians will return to the rule 'if you can work from home, you should work from home' but office workers will be able to return up to 25 per cent or up to 10 people, whichever is greater.

There remains a significant risk of Delta cases seeding from NSW or metropolitan Melbourne, and as a result the Chief Health Officer has recommended this careful easing.

Regional schools will reopen for onsite learning for Prep to Grade 2 and Year 12 students who live in regional Victoria, while remote learning will remain for all other levels. Onsite supervision at schools remains available for vulnerable children and children of essential workers in all year levels, including for students from metropolitan Melbourne.

Funerals will be permitted for up to 20 people and weddings will be permitted for up to 10 people, plus those required to conduct the service. Stricter limits will be in place for both weddings and funerals with people from Melbourne in attendance.

Restaurants and cafes can reopen for seated service with patron caps. Retail, hairdressing, entertainment venues and community facilities will also open in line with density limits and patron caps. Masks will continue to be required indoors and outdoors, apart from private residences, unless an exception applies.

While restrictions remain in metropolitan Melbourne, we need to do everything we can to ensure the virus does not travel into regional Victoria. Businesses that are open in regional Victoria – such as restaurants or beauty services – must check the IDs of everyone they serve.

Given the clearly increasing risk coming from Melbourne, Victoria Police will significantly expand their operation along the metropolitan border to protect regional Victoria. Police will also be out in force in regional areas, conducting spot checks to ensure people from metropolitan Melbourne are not in the regionals unless for authorised reasons. The fine for breaching the Chief Health Officer's directions is \$5,452.

The only change to restrictions for metropolitan Melbourne right now will see single parents now able to access childcare, regardless of whether they are an authorised worker.

We are asking all Melburnians to do keep doing the right thing, follow the rules and help protect our regional communities.

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

With the situation in New South Wales still so unstable and community transmission so widespread, the Victorian Government is also working to make sure Victorians stuck on the border can return home safely as soon as possible.

As part of National Cabinet's work on the National Plan, a number of states including Victoria, have agreed with the Commonwealth to commence trials of home-based quarantine. The first of these pilots will support around 200 Victorian residents who have been stuck on the NSW side of the border to return home.

Victorians who have been residing in a NSW Local Government Border Area for at least the 14 days from Wednesday, 25 August to Wednesday, 8 September will be able to apply for a new permit exemption category: 'Victorians in the cross-border community' to come home.

Applications for exemptions will be open for seven days from midday on Friday 10 September, closing at 6:00pm on Friday 17 September 2021.

Victorians applying for this exemption will need to provide proof of their primary residence in Victoria, evidence of a negative COVID19 test result 48 hours prior to their arrival in Victoria and that they have received at least their first dose of a coronavirus vaccine. Applicants will also be required to provide evidence such as receipts and QR check in records that they have stayed within the border region and maintained minimal social contact while in NSW.

Victorians will be able to apply for the repatriation exemption via the Service Victoria website and applications will be assessed within 72 hours. Successful applicants will be required to drive directly to their home in Victoria, stopping only for a further test along the way and then isolate at their home for 14 days.

Any other household members are also required to quarantine and compliance checks from authorised officers will help ensure returnees are observing their quarantine obligations.

Any Victorians who are currently in NSW or the ACT but have not been in a designated NSW border Local Government Area all of the last 14 days are not eligible to apply and should remain where they are.

Further pilots are being worked on which would support Victorians in other areas of NSW and the ACT who want to come home. Some of these trials for people coming from higher risk areas may involve technology solutions to assist with monitoring of home quarantine.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

"While this is fantastic news for most of regional Victoria, we're encouraging everyone in these areas to keep up all the COVIDSafe practices and most importantly, keep coming forward to get vaccinated."

"We thank every member of the Shepparton community who has worked so hard to bring the outbreak there under control. If everyone keeps getting tested and supporting their friends and family to isolate when needed, then we hope Shepparton will soon be able to join the rest of regional Victoria in easing restrictions."

Quote attributable to Minister for Health Martin Foley

"With the situation in New South Wales still so serious, we want to ensure all Victorians on the border are able to return home to their families – this home quarantine pilot scheme will allow them to do that safely, while still protecting the community."

"We recognise these are strict quarantine requirements but while Victorians are doing the hard yards staying at home to keep case numbers down, we can't risk bringing additional cases in from interstate."