

Media Release

Mr Tim Pallas MP

Treasurer

Minister for Economic Development

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CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY TO SHUT DOWN FOR TWO WEEKS

Due to continued concern about case numbers, transmission risk and reduced compliance, construction will shut down in metropolitan Melbourne and other Local Government Areas currently in lockdown for two weeks from 11.59pm, Monday 20 September.

Recently, we have seen multiple outbreaks linked to construction. Construction workers are a mobile workforce who may work across multiple sites and travel longer distances to work than other permitted workers. Concerns have also been raised, and remain, about the sector's compliance with public health measures and directions.

Also concerning is the transmission risk and geographic spread of construction cases, which led to a number of important public health measures including preventing workers crossing the regional/metropolitan border – but more action is required to stop the spread.

The immediate shut down action is being taken to reduce movement, minimise transmission and allow for the entire industry to appropriately adapt to the Chief Health Officer Directions, including increasing vaccination rates.

All construction projects in metropolitan Melbourne, City of Ballarat, City of Greater Geelong, Surf Coast Shire and Mitchell Shire will be closed, with a strictly limited exemption for workers to attend the sites to respond to an emergency or perform urgent and essential work to protect health and safety. An amnesty will be put in place so that a limited number of workers can attend construction sites in order to shut them down safely.

All government construction projects in metropolitan Melbourne and relevant LGAs will be closed, with no new work to be completed – other than work required to make the site safe and secure.

All sites will be required to demonstrate compliance with Chief Health Officer Directions prior to reopening – including the requirement for workers to show evidence to their employer of having had one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine before they return to site on 5 October. From 11.59pm 23 September, all construction workers require at least their first dose of the vaccine. This means that before workers return to site, they must comply with this new requirement.

The Victorian Government will work with stakeholders over coming days to determine the best way for the industry to show full compliance with the Directions.

The Government will continue to work with the industry to get as many workers vaccinated as possible – with the priority blitz continuing until Sunday 26 September, including walk-up appointments (without a booking) available at key sites. For more information about priority vaccine access, visit <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/vaccine>.

A COVID-19 disaster payment is available to help workers unable to earn income due to public health orders, with more info available at <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/covid-19-disaster-payment>.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Industrial Relations Tim Pallas

“We’ve been clear: if you don’t follow the rules, we won’t hesitate to take action – we have seen widespread non-compliance across the industry and that’s why we’re taking necessary steps to protect every single Victorian.”

“We put the industry on notice just a week ago, we have seen appalling behaviour on site and on our streets, and now we’re acting decisively and without hesitation.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Health Martin Foley

“The health and safety of every Victorian is our number one priority. That goes for construction workers, too – who can get priority access for a vaccine appointment.”