

Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier



Thursday, 16 September 2021

NEW FREEDOMS WHEN 70 PER CENT FIRST DOSE TARGET REACHED

Thanks to the incredible efforts of our community, Victoria will hit our 70 per cent first dose vaccination target tomorrow – becoming the second state in Australia to do so.

With this milestone, new freedoms can take effect – but emerging risks must be addressed and we need to keep the momentum going to hit 70 per cent and 80 per cent double dose targets as soon as possible.

Victoria's Chief Health Officer has recommended some modest easing to restrictions from 11.59pm Friday, 17 September in lockdown areas of metropolitan Melbourne and Ballarat – expanding outdoor social interaction, exercise, the distance you can travel from home and more.

The most significant change is that there will now be one other reason to leave home: outdoor social interaction.

This means one person may meet another person not from their household for a picnic, a walk, or another outdoor activity. Additionally, up to five adults (plus dependents) from two households will be able to gather outdoors if all adults present have received both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

The time permitted for exercise – and now outdoor social interaction – will increase from two hours a day to four hours. The distance you can leave home for shopping for necessary goods and services, exercise and outdoor social interaction will increase from five kilometres to 10 kilometres.

As part of further changes to exercise, two people will now be able to train outdoors with a personal trainer. Skate parks and outdoor communal exercise equipment will reopen.

Child-minding for school-aged children will be permitted if only one parent is an authorised worker.

Up to five people will be able to attend an entertainment venue or physical recreation facility to broadcast a performance, class, or concert.

Real estate inspections will resume by appointment only. To ensure they're COVIDSafe, only people from the same household can attend the inspection appointment and the real estate agent must stay outdoors during the inspection.

While these changes can go ahead, public health officials have become increasingly concerned about COVID-19 transmission and exposure in construction settings, with evidence that it emerging as a 'vector' of the virus into regional areas. Changes will be made to limit further spread in this industry, allowing people to keep working safely.

In order to continue working, construction workers state-wide will need to show evidence to their employer that they have had a first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine by 11:59pm Thursday, 23 September.

Limited medical exemptions and proof-of-booking exceptions will apply, in line with previous requirements for residential aged care workers.

In light of the cases seeding from Melbourne into regional Victoria, construction workers will now not be able to cross the metropolitan-regional boundary for work. Tea rooms will need to close and food or drink will not be able to be consumed indoors at work. Worker shift bubbles must be in practice and all sites will require a COVIDSafe Marshal on site.

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

From 11.59pm tomorrow night, there will also be some changes to COVIDSafe settings in regional Victoria – excluding the City of Ballarat which entered lockdown yesterday.

In regional Victoria, gyms and outdoor and indoor pools (excluding spas, saunas and steam rooms) will reopen with limits and hydrotherapy and swimming lessons can occur. Tour buses can operate up to 10 people.

Victorians can book their vaccination appointment at a state-run centre by visiting portal.cvms.vic.gov.au or by phoning the Coronavirus hotline on 1800 675 398.

Construction workers can also access priority booking (phone only) and can walk up without a booking for Pfizer during key times at the old Ford Factory in Campbellfield, the former Bunnings in Melton West, Eagle Stadium in Werribee and the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital.

If you're yet to be vaccinated, please book your appointment today – either in state-run centres, or at your GP or local pharmacy. The best vaccine is the vaccine you can get today. If have any questions or concerns you can talk to a GP, pharmacist or to a senior and experienced immuniser at our state-run sites.

While we're able to make these changes now, we still can't afford to let this virus run free – our hospital system would be overrun, our frontline staff would be placed under extreme pressure, and quite frankly, people will die. We need to keep slowing the spread of the virus until enough of us are fully vaccinated.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

"While these are modest changes, today is a positive day and sign of things to come for Victorians once we get our double dose vaccination rates up."

"It's also a signal: if you are vaccinated, you can get back to doing the things you love, sooner. If you aren't vaccinated, then the safety of everyone else has to come first."

"With more than 6 million vaccine doses delivered in Victoria, we'll continue to ramp up and do everything we can to keep this momentum going, so we can have Victoria open and thriving again as soon as possible."

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Martin Foley

"While we can make these changes today, we need to continue to follow the health directions to keep cases under control, to protect our health system and most importantly to protect our friends and family from this virus."

"We've got a vaccination blitz underway for construction workers – and I encourage everyone in the industry to phone up today for a priority booking, wherever they live."