

Friday, 10 December 2021

IMPLEMENTING VICTORIA'S NEW PANDEMIC FRAMEWORK

As part of the Victorian Government's new pandemic management framework, Premier Daniel Andrews has made a formal pandemic declaration applying to the State of Victoria from 11:59pm, Wednesday 15 December 2021 until 11:59pm, Wednesday 12 January 2022.

The declaration is made under section 165AB (1) of the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* and replaces the current State of Emergency declaration, which expires at 11:59pm on 15 December and will not be extended.

The pandemic declaration was made after consultation with and consideration of advice from the Chief Health Officer (CHO) and Minister for Health. In making the declaration, the Premier was satisfied on reasonable grounds there was a serious risk to public health throughout Victoria arising from the coronavirus pandemic disease.

In advising the Premier to make a pandemic declaration, the CHO noted the widespread community transmission of coronavirus in Victoria and the presence of active cases in the community – a significant proportion of whom require supported care.

The CHO also advised protective measures were necessary to ensure the Victorian health system is not overwhelmed.

The initial pandemic declaration can be renewed within four weeks, if the Premier is satisfied on reasonable grounds the pandemic continues to be a serious risk to public health. After the first declaration, further pandemic declarations can be extended every three months.

The Statement of Reasons and the advice of both the CHO and Minister for Health will be tabled in Parliament. A copy of the pandemic declaration will be published in the Government Gazette.

Once a pandemic declaration has been made, the Minister for Health has the power to make pandemic orders he considers reasonably necessary to protect public health. These powers are similar to the CHO's power to make public health directions and are in line with powers available in other jurisdictions across Australia.

The new pandemic framework has strengthened parliamentary oversight, with an independent joint investigatory committee and the ability for the Parliament to disallow pandemic orders.

Pandemic orders are made after the Minister for Health considers the CHO's advice and other factors he considers relevant, including social and economic factors. The orders will be published on the Pandemic Orders Register on the Department of Health website.

Parliament and the Independent Pandemic Management Advisory Committee will oversee the operation of the new pandemic management framework.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

"We've learned a lot over the past two years of this global pandemic – now, we're applying these lessons to manage pandemics in the future, support our public health system, keep Victorians safe and keep our vaccinated economy open."