

Media Release

The Hon Martin Foley MP
Minister for Health
Minister for Ambulance Services
Minister for Equality



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EASING RESTRICTIONS FOR CRUISE SHIP PASSENGERS AND VOTERS

Victoria is preparing for the return of cruise ships later this year with sensible protocols to reduce the risks of large outbreaks, while allowing passengers to enjoy everything that Victoria has to offer.

Health Departments in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland have worked together to align requirements for cruise ship operators and passengers, with the Commonwealth ban on cruise ships ending this month.

Cruise ship protocols will protect Victorians as well as the workers and passengers on the vessels, which are susceptible to large outbreaks. The protocols include the following measures:

- All passengers over 12 must have received two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, and all crew must be 'up to date' with three doses (with exceptions for those who aren't yet eligible)
- Unvaccinated children under 12 or anyone with a valid medical exemption can travel, but they must not make up more than five per cent of the ship's passengers
- Passengers must obtain a negative COVID-19 test before embarking, and if boarding with symptoms they must have another negative PCR test that day. Crew will test every 14 days, or when symptomatic
- All crew must wear masks on board except when in their rooms. All passengers must wear masks when embarking and disembarking, and indoors onboard if social distancing is not possible
- Cruise ship operators must undertake public health measures to reduce the risk of transmission, including developing COVIDSafe plans for shore excursions and managing cases and contacts onboard

Cruise ship protocols will not apply to people arriving on passenger ships that sleep fewer than 100. Entry requirements for fully vaccinated or exempt non-cruise maritime crew will be the same as those for air crew.

Among other changes to Pandemic Orders from 11:59pm tonight, vaccination requirements won't apply to any venue when it is operating as a polling place for the upcoming federal election. Further COVIDSafe voting advice will be provided to the Victorian public in advance of early voting starting next month.

Regarding isolation rules, the AHPPC statement published on 31 March advised, "making changes, including changes to quarantine settings, that will result in increased transmission in the community at a time when cases are already increasing or are at their peak, may result in further disruption to the health system."

In this context, Victoria continues to monitor and review COVID settings and work closely with other jurisdictions to ensure that they are nationally consistent and in line with national and Victorian public health advice.

As we reach the Omicron BA.2 peak and case numbers begin to plateau, the Minister for Health will reconsider all health orders. If epidemiological conditions are as forecast, we expect school children will not have to wear masks when they return for Term 2.

Further information on setting changes will be updated when they take effect at coronavirus.vic.gov.au.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Martin Foley

"We currently have the fewest restrictions in place since the beginning of the pandemic, and the sensible settings that are in place can be reviewed following the peak in cases."

"The return of cruise ships later this year is great news for our visitor economy, and our COVIDSafe protocols will protect workers, passengers, and the communities and attractions that will host cruise ship excursions."

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