

Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier



Tuesday, 20 July 2021

EXTENDED LOCKDOWN AND STRONGER BORDERS TO KEEP US SAFE

Due to the current level of community transmission of coronavirus in Victoria from the recent New South Wales (NSW) incursions, the current lockdown will be extended and travel to Victoria using Red Zone Permits will be temporarily paused, to ensure we run this Delta outbreak to ground.

Victoria's Chief Health Officer has declared that the current restrictions in Victoria will remain in place for at least another seven days in order to stamp out this Delta variant and keep Victorians safe.

Just over a week ago, the Delta variant made its way into our state from NSW and since then, Victoria's contact tracers have worked around the clock to contain this virus but today we still stand with 85 active cases and:

- more than 15,000 primary close contacts in quarantine
- more than 250 exposure sites online stretching from Phillip Island to the Mallee; and
- daily cases in double figures.

This is how quickly the Delta variant is moving – faster than anything Victoria's public health experts have seen before it. It means we need to limit movement for a longer period of time so contact tracers can get ahead of the virus, instead of just keeping pace with it.

This means that current settings will continue for the next seven days until Tuesday, 27 July at 11.59pm. There are only five reasons to leave home: getting the food and the supplies you need, exercising for up to two hours, care or caregiving, work or education if you can't do it from home, or to get vaccinated at the nearest possible location.

Shopping and exercise must be done within 5kms of your home or the nearest location.

It also means face masks will remain mandatory indoors (not at home) and outdoors unless an exception applies – this includes all workplaces, and secondary schools.

Minor changes will be made to the Authorised Premises and Authorised Worker List to include services that operate solely outdoors where physical distancing can be maintained at all times, pet grooming mobile services and pamphlet delivery services. Further details can be found at coronavirus.vic.gov.au.

In welcome news for many families, from Wednesday 21 July more students with disability will be able to return to on-site learning. Where a parent or carer indicates that a student with a disability cannot learn from home due to vulnerability or family stress, the school must provide on-site learning for that student. This change will apply to students enrolled in specialist schools and students with a disability enrolled in mainstream schools.

Since the beginning of the second wave in Sydney, the Victorian Government has supported around 10,000 Victorians to return home from orange and red zone areas and health authorities have provided clear warnings that Victorians in NSW should get home as quickly as possible because of the escalating situation there.

Given how fast we have seen cases spread over the last week, it is clear a further incursion of the Delta strain cases from interstate would potentially cause the lockdown to last even longer and threaten our ability to ease restrictions.

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

Due to the serious and persistent nature of the risk in NSW, we cannot continue to have hundreds of people coming to Victoria from the red zone every day. For this reason, the Chief Health Officer will temporarily pause the issuing of Red Zone Permits from 11:59pm on Tuesday 20 July – pending a further review in a fortnight.

For at least the next two weeks, Victorian residents in red zones will require an exemption to enter the state – and these will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

If people enter Victoria from New South Wales without an exemption, they will be put on a return flight or placed in 14 days mandatory quarantine under the COVID-19 Quarantine Victoria (CQV) program.

Fines of \$5,452 may be imposed if a person is found to have entered Victoria from a red zone without a permit.

A person will still be able to enter Victoria from a red zone if they are aircrew, listed on the Specified Worker List, or transiting through Victoria to another jurisdiction – e.g. traveling from regional NSW through Mildura to get home to South Australia.

The CHO will continue to consider the status of the Australian Capital Territory, but the pause of Red Zone Permits also applies to that jurisdiction while it is classified as a red zone.

There are no changes to the current arrangements for border communities.

Quote attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

“We cannot put Victoria’s hard-earned gains at risk by letting this Delta variant run free. We want Victoria back open as soon as possible – and we’ll do everything in our power to get us there safely and quickly.”

Quote attributable Minister for Health Martin Foley

“We’ve had thousands of Victorians return from New South Wales in recent weeks, but with the situation escalating, the recent incursions and the increased infectiousness of the Delta variant, we must act to protect Victoria and temporarily pause Red Zone Permits.”

Quote attributable to Victoria’s Chief Health Officer Brett Sutton

“The Delta variant is more infectious and moving faster than we’ve seen in any of our other outbreaks and we will not take the risk of opening up too soon – this extension of the current restrictions will help us contain this outbreak.”