

Update on the National Response to COVID-19

24 August 2020

Overview

National Testing Statistics

As at 24 August, there have been 5,706,587 tests for COVID-19 carried out in Australia.

Of these, 0.4% were positive and (99.6%) were negative.

As at 24 August, there have been 24,812 total cases. Of these, 19,228 have recovered. 1,528 cases have been locally acquired in the last 7-day period.

There have been 502 deaths attributed to COVID-19.

The central focus of the Australian Government remains the containment and suppression of the outbreak in Victoria. However, today's increase in Victoria of 116 cases is the lowest daily number of new cases in more than 7 weeks. On 21 August, National Cabinet received an update from the Premier of Victoria, the Hon Daniel Andrews, focussing the Cabinet on new principles to manage interstate borders, a national emergency response for the aged care sector, a national vaccine strategy, the Victorian outbreak, mental health, and importing Pacific labour.

National Cabinet agreed to define 'hotspot' so that border closures and isolation requirements are not based on arbitrary decisions. The National Cabinet also agreed to establish a code similar to the freight code, which was agreed to at the last meeting, for casual agriculture workers who cross the border. Finally, it was agreed that a common operating picture from the national dashboard would be released weekly to provide a snapshot of the nationwide Coronavirus figures.

The Commonwealth in partnership with the Victorian Government agreed to stand up the Victorian Disability Response Centre to serve a similar function to the Aged Care Response Centre. The \$15 million joint-funding will help to mitigate the risks the virus poses in the sector by monitoring the workforce, in particular workforce mobility.

The Federal Parliament will legislate changes to the Job Keeper and Job Seeker packages this week as they resume sitting. Commonwealth support is currently 15 per cent of the national economy and as such, states are being urged by the Governor of the Reserve Bank to lift their fiscal stimulus.

National Three Step Framework for Reopening

On 7 August the National Cabinet recommitted to a strategy of suppression, including the implementation of the national three-stage plan. The plan was adopted at National Cabinet on 8



May and provides national guidelines for states to reopen according to the public health situation.

Step 1

- Five visitors in a home, 10 in business and public places
- Work from home if possible
- Restaurants, cafes and shopping with social distancing
- Local and regional travel
- Extensive population-based testing

Step 2

- Gatherings of 20 in homes, businesses and public places
- Work from home if possible
- Gyms, beauty, cinemas, galleries and amusement parks
- Caravan or camping groups
- Some interstate travel

Step 3

- Gatherings of 100
- Return to the workplace
- Nightclubs, food courts and other venues open
- Interstate travel and consideration given to the relaxation of cross-Tasman, Pacific Island and international student travel

Further guidelines announced in late June included mandatory testing on hotel quarantine exit and entry and a one-person per two square metre rule for small business premises.

Although the guidelines were intended to be implemented in a synchronised manner across all jurisdictions, differing rates of COVID-19 infections has resulted in a considerable divergence between states and territories on the implementation of the plan, particularly in relation to border restrictions.

New South Wales

In the 24 hours to 8pm on Sunday 23 August, there were 3 new cases reported in NSW with 2 from hotel quarantine.

Instances of community transmission have remained consistent throughout the month of August, with multiple hotspots producing new infections up to 22 cases per day and over the last 11 days in the single digits. NSW hotspots are primarily in South-West and Western Sydney, such as Fairfax, Canterbury-Bankstown, Cumberland, and Parramatta. The virus has further shown



signs of community transmission in other Sydney suburbs such as Potts Point, Cherrybrook, and the Central Coast.

On Monday 17 August, the NSW Government announced new restrictions to school activity, following multiple cases of community transmission in schools across Sydney. As of 17th August, NSW schools must comply with the following measures for the entirety of Term 3:

- Schools must not travel outside their designated local community or zone, particularly for sporting events
- Interschool sport and carnivals are restricted to 100 people per venue
- All group singing, chanting and wind instrument activities are to cease
- School formals, graduations and other social events are not permitted

On 6 August, the NSW Government amended public health orders related to the quarantine of maritime arrivals. The amendments provided additional details on the minimisation of risks associated with maritime vessels and ports.

From 6 August, NSW residents returning from Victoria have been required to quarantine for 14 days at designated hotels. From August 12 to mid-September, fees for returning NSW residents in hotel quarantine are being waived.

From 24 July 2020, New South Wales venues have been subject to additional restrictions in response to an increase in community transmission. All venues are required to register as COVID-Safe with the NSW Government. Venues are required to develop and keep COVID-Safe Plans on their premises, and some are required to employ a COVID-19 Safety Hygiene Marshal on the premises to ensure compliance with COVID Safe Plans. Penalties apply for failure to comply with plans, and plan(s) must always be kept at the venue(s).

The NSW Government is enforcing strict limits on travel into NSW from Victoria. Individuals are only be allowed to enter NSW from Victoria if approval has been granted by the NSW Government according to exemptions delineated in the regulations. Discrete arrangements exist for border communities, critical services, and compassionate needs. Entrants will generally be required to self-isolate for 14 days following arrival in NSW.

NSW remains in the third stage of reopening, which commenced on 1 July.

Rules relating to the NSW-Victorian border can be found [here](#).

Exemptions for remote communities are listed [here](#)

Victoria

As of Monday, 14 August 2020 Victoria had conducted 2,028,909 coronavirus tests. Of those 17,683 tested positive for COVID-19. 4,868 active cases remained in Victoria, with 12,334



recovered and 376 who had died from the virus. 985 cases were acquired overseas, 12,178 cases were acquired locally from known sources, 3,784 were acquired locally from unknown sources and 736 cases remain under investigation.

On Sunday, 2 August, Premier Daniel Andrews announced the Victorian Government's response to the continued increase in community transmission of COVID-19 - across Metropolitan Melbourne and Regional Victoria.

From 6:00pm Sunday, 2 August, Victoria moved from a State of Emergency to a State of Disaster. The State of Disaster gives police additional powers to ensure people are complying with public health directions.

Subsequently, on Sunday 2 August Metropolitan Melbourne moved to Stage Four restrictions until September 13, 2020. These restrictions allow for only four reasons to leave households:

1. Shopping for food or other essential items – within five kilometres of an individual's household, by one member of the household, once a day.
2. To provide caregiving, for compassionate reasons or to seek medical treatment.
3. For exercise – within five kilometres of an individual's household – in groups of no more than two – once a day for no longer than one hour - recreational sport is not permitted.
4. Work or study if you cannot work or study from home.

Household restrictions remain in place:

- Households cannot have visitors to their homes - except for caregiving, compassionate reasons or for receiving services. Exemptions include visiting partners in relationships.
- Individuals cannot visit friends and family who live at another household, except for caregiving, compassionate reasons or providing services.

Curfew

Stage Four Restrictions includes a strict curfew for Metropolitan Melbourne. Curfew begins every evening at 8pm and concludes the following morning at 5am. The only reasons permitted to leave home during curfew hours are for work, medical care and caregiving.

Metropolitan Victorians are expected to sleep in the same household for the next six weeks - there are exemptions for partners who live apart and for work if required.

Stage Four Industry Framework

The Victorian Government has divided industries into three major categories. *Primary* industries that can remain open without change. *Secondary*, industries that can remain open, on the condition of adjustments in how they operate - and *Tertiary* industries that must close. A



detailed table outlining industries, operational changes and exemptions can be found below. In brief:

Primary Industries: include supermarkets, grocery stores, bottle shops, pharmacies, petrol stations, bank branches, newsagencies, post offices —and all industries involved in the frontline Pandemic response — including healthcare and emergency services.

Secondary Industries: include retail stores who can operate contactless, within a 'click and collect' and delivery services operating structure. Hardware, building and gardening stores can remain open onsite, but for tradespeople only. Abattoirs can remain open with a 33 per cent reduction compared to peak capacity, this will apply state-wide, and will require workers to have access to, and work in hospital-grade PPE. Heavy industry, warehousing, distribution, and essential supply manufacturing can continue to operate with strict COVID-Safe measures in place – including limiting workers on site. Some construction can continue with capacity restrictions.

Tertiary Industries: include industries where onsite operations will have to cease for the next six weeks. This includes discretionary retail, some manufacturing and administration. These businesses will all need to close by 11:59pm Wednesday 5 August, unless they have specific circumstances that mean they need longer to shutdown safely.

Airports

Premier Daniel Andrews has made requests to the Federal Government to extend the diversion of incoming international flights and the quarantine of passengers to other Australian cities. The diversion request will continue through stage four lockdown.

Face Coverings

From 11:59pm Sunday, 2 August, masks, or face coverings are mandatory *across all of Victoria* when outside households for everyone over the age of twelve. Exceptions apply, including for relevant medical conditions.

For more information on Stage Four Restrictions, see Hawker Britton's brief [here](#).

For information on directives for open industry, including links to mandatory work permits, COVID Safe Plan templates and guidance, see Hawker Britton's brief [here](#).

Moratorium on Evictions and Rent Increases Extended

On Thursday 20 August, Treasurer Tim Pallas announced an extension to the State's moratorium on evictions and rental increases. Under the extension, evictions will continue to be banned for residential and commercial tenants until 31 December, unless in rare and specific circumstances.

Treasurer Pallas emphasised the Government intends to play a role in helping tenants and landlords find common ground. As such, the extended moratorium will be complemented with additional support for both tenants and landlords. For details see Hawker Britton's brief [here](#).



Regional Victoria

From 11:59pm Wednesday, 5 August – Regional Victoria will move to Stage Three restrictions, with the exception of meat processing and the education sector – which will move to Stage Four restrictions alongside those in Metropolitan Melbourne. These restrictions will remain in place until September 13, 2020. Mitchell Shire Council has been reallocated as a part of regional Victoria, and so will remain in stage three lockdown. These restrictions allow for only four reasons to leave the house:

1. Shopping for food or other essential items.
2. To provide caregiving, for compassionate reasons or to seek medical treatment.
3. For exercise (outdoor exercise only, with only one other person or members of your household).
4. Work or study if you cannot work or study from home.

Additional restrictions have also been put in place:

- Households cannot have visitors to their homes – except for caregiving or compassionate reasons or for receiving services. Exemptions include visiting partners in relationships.
- Individuals can no longer visit friends and family who live in another household, except for caregiving or compassionate reasons or providing services.

For details on Stage Three Restrictions see Hawker Britton's Occasional Paper [here](#).

Borders

Victoria's borders are open, with no specific restrictions on residents of other states.

Tasmania

Following the Premier's announcement on 18 August, the Tasmanian border restrictions are likely to remain in place until 1 December 2020. Returning Tasmanians must quarantine at a government-designated facility for 14 days at a cost of \$2,800. Essential travellers are not required to quarantine but are subject to mandatory testing and must take specific precautions.

Non-Tasmanian residents may enter Tasmania if they have not spent time in Victoria in the past 14 days. Such Travellers will be required to quarantine for 14 days at a government-designated facility at a cost of \$2,800.



Further details on Tasmanian border restrictions can be found [here](#).

On 26 July, the Tasmanian government recommitted to stage three of reopening. The following gathering restrictions will apply:

- The lesser of either one person per two square metres, 250 (indoors), or 500 (outdoors)
- Household gatherings to remain capped at 20 visitors

South Australia

From Wednesday 5 August, the South Australian government introduced additional public health restrictions. While Stage 3 of reopening remains in place, the situation in Victoria is an ongoing concern for South Australia. The restrictions include:

- A limit of ten people for gatherings in private homes,
- A requirement that public activities be conducted according to the 1 person per 2 square metres, and
- Hosts of public activities are required to create and comply with a COVID Safe Plan.

Further details on the regulations can be found [here](#).

The South Australian Government has further announced that from August 21, only Victorians who are essential travellers will be able to enter South Australia, with minor exceptions. These exceptions include Year 11 and 12 students and farmers with properties on both sides of the border. SA Police Commissioner Grant Stevens today announced that people who have a permit for 'employment, education, providing and receiving support or obtaining food, petrol or medical supplies' will not be able to enter South Australia from Victoria. This comes after COVID-19 cases were recorded in border towns such as Portland and Horsham.

Furthermore, from August 21 certain businesses will have to have COVID-Safe marshals to ensure people are social distancing and maintaining hygiene. Such businesses include licensed premises, cafes, restaurants, shopping centres and gyms.

As of August 27, all personal aged care workers will only be allowed to work in one aged care facility, as the potential for coronavirus to spread between institutions would be 'devastating'. All staff working at aged care facilities would be required to undergo infection control training.

Queensland

Queensland remains in Stage 3 of reopening in accordance with National Cabinet Guidelines. The 'one person per four square metre' rule determines the number of individuals permitted inside indoor venues. Smaller venues under 200sqm will be permitted to accommodate guests at a



'one person per two square metre' rule. Guests must be seated. Casino operations have resumed, along with service of alcohol at a bar. Private gatherings will be subject to a maximum of 100 people.

Restrictions have been imposed in respect of travel into Queensland from designated hotspots. As of 1am Saturday August 8, the Chief Health Officer designated the state of Victoria, New South Wales, and the Australian Capital Territory as coronavirus hotspots.

An individual who has visited a hotspot within the past 14 days will be prohibited from entering Queensland unless:

- The person is resident in Queensland
- Has substantive reason that permits the Queensland Chief Health Officer to grant an exemption.

The Queensland-New South Wales land border was entirely closed, however, the QLD Government announced on the 24th of August that workers in the agribusiness or commercial fishing sector in both states are allowed to cross the border. These workers will require a proof of property ownership/lease/agistment agreement, a copy of a letter of exemption and proof of identity.

People entering Queensland from hotspots (including Queensland residents) are required to enter via the airport and to quarantine for 14 days in an approved quarantine hotel at the personal expense of approximately \$200 per night. Breaches of quarantine orders will be subject to penalties of over \$4,000, and false border declarations may carry jail time.

Western Australia

On 27 June Western Australia commenced the fourth phase of reopening. The numbers permitted in any venue are determined by the 'one person per two square metre' rule.

Travel is now permitted throughout all regions within WA, except for entry into remote Aboriginal communities.

The WA border, however, remains closed apart from those covering the following exempted categories:

- Senior government officials in the course of duties
- Members of the Commonwealth Parliament and their staff
- Active military personnel on duty in WA
- Specialist skills not available in WA
- Emergency service workers
- Judicial officers or staff members of a court, tribunal or commission
- Persons carrying out a function under a Commonwealth law



- Health services, when requested by the Chief Health Officer of the Department of Health
- FIFO workers and their family members
- Urgent and essential medical treatment
- Attending a relative's funeral or visiting a relative who is critically ill or whose death is imminent
- Transport, freight and logistics (not including airline and maritime crew members)
- Compassionate grounds

Based on the latest health advice, Phase 5 of the WA COVID-19 roadmap, has been delayed until Friday 23 October.

Phase 5 would see remaining restrictions removed, except WA's hard border and access to remote Aboriginal communities.

It would also see the removal of WA's 2 square metre rule and the 50 per cent capacity for our major venues.

A decision as to whether Phase 5 can be brought forward will occur in October.

Australian Capital Territory

From 6 August the ACT commenced part one of stage three of reopening in accordance with National Cabinet Guidelines. The number of individuals permitted inside indoor venues will be determined by the "one person per four square metre rule". Private gatherings remain subject to a 100-person limit.

From 6 August, there was a reopening of casinos and gaming in clubs, food courts (dine-in), steam-based services, including saunas, steam rooms, steam cabinets and bathhouses, strip clubs, brothels, escort agencies and 24-hour gyms – max. 25 people when unstaffed.

The next checkpoint was not approved on August 20. The next review will be on September 3.

ACT residents are advised not to travel to Greater Sydney or Victoria.

ACT residents are strongly advised not to travel to the suburbs of Melbourne where community transmission is occurring, and which will be under stage four lockdown for the next six weeks.

From 8 July, non-residents travelling to the ACT from Victoria will be denied entry to the ACT unless granted an exemption by ACT Health. ACT residents returning from Victoria will be required to notify the ACT Government and quarantine for 14 days. Individuals entering from other states will need to apply for an exemption to enter the ACT, and ACT Health may impose the appropriate conditions on those exemptions. For instance, the ACT government has indicated that individuals travelling from NSW hotspots may be required to self-isolate.



Northern Territory

Despite zero active cases in the Territory, its hard borders remain closed.

All people travelling to the Northern Territory must complete the border entry form.

If you are intending to travel to the Northern Territory from an identified coronavirus hotspot you are advised to cancel your plans. Likewise, if you are a Territorian intending to travel to a hotspot you are advised to cancel your plans.

Any exemption granted before the 17 July 2020 are invalid if the person travelling has been in an identified hotspot.

Anyone arriving into the Northern Territory from or through a declared hotspot in the last 14 days must undertake 14 days mandatory supervised quarantine. This will be at your own cost. The cost per person for supervised quarantine is \$2500.

Mandatory supervised quarantine will be at the Howard Springs quarantine facility or another approved facility elsewhere in the Northern Territory.

Events with less than 100 people do not require completion of a checklist or safety plan, however, the physical distancing and hygiene principles should still be considered and implemented.

Events and public gatherings of 100 to 500 people must complete a COVID-19 safety checklist.

Major events and public gatherings of over 500 people must submit a COVID-19 Event Safety Plan and receive formal approval from the Chief Health Officer prior to the event proceeding.

Further Information

For more information on COVID-19 and related government matters see [Hawker Britton Occasional Papers](#)

For information on Federal, NSW, South Australian, and Tasmanian responses to COVID-19 and related matters see [here](#).

For more information, contact Hawker Britton [here](#).

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