

Updated Mask Mandates in Victoria and a Safe Return to the Office

On Tuesday 22 February 2022, Victorian Premier, Daniel Andrews, alongside the Victorian Minister for Health, Martin Foley declared that as of 11:59pm on Friday 25 February 2022, the public health recommendation for Victorians to work or study from home will be withdrawn.

Due to the increased third dose vaccination rates in conjunction with a decline of COVID-19 hospitalisation rates, the Victorian Government also announced the latest update to mask mandates and elective surgery in Victoria.

Mask Mandates

As of 11:59pm on Friday 25 February 2022, masks will no longer be required indoors with some exceptions. The following circumstances outline settings where mask wearing will still be required unless an exemption applies:

- Those travelling via public transport, in taxis or rideshares, on planes and indoors at airports
- Those working or visiting hospitals or other indoor areas at care facilities
- Those working in hospitality, in retail or at the court system
- Those working at justice or in correctional facilities
- Those working indoors at events with more than 30,000 individuals attending
- Those who are infected with COVID-19, or those who are close contacts of individuals with COVID-19 in exceptional circumstances when required to leave the home.

The Victorian government has also announced that mask wearing will no longer be required for those attending secondary schools with second dose vaccination rates among children aged between 12 and 15 sitting at 77.19% and children aged between 16 and 17 it is 79.25%.

In contrast, only 52.99% of children aged between 5 and 11 have received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccination. That's why masks must continue to be worn by the following people unless an exemption applies:

- Primary school students in year 3 or above
- Primary school teachers
- Early childhood workers.

Elective Surgery

As of Monday 28 February 2022, remaining restrictions on elective surgery will be lifted. Private hospitals from this date will be able to return to pre-COVID activities. Public hospitals can resume to a capacity deemed appropriate by the hospitals. Eligibility requirements are to be based on COVID-19 demands, staff availability and individual assessment.

Workers Return to the Office

As of 11:59pm on Friday 25 February 2022, the recommendation for people to work or study from home when possible will be removed. In addition to this announcement, the Victorian Minister for Health will also declare a number of deadline extensions and temporary exceptions for workers required to receive their third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Those additional announcements are as follows:

- Educational workers have until Friday 25 March 2022 to have received their third COVID-19 vaccination dose. Previously, this requirement was to be a month earlier.
- Workers who are not eligible to receive their third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine will have a deadline of three months and two weeks from when they acquired their second dose.
- Workers who have recently returned to Australia from overseas will have a third dose deadline of four weeks from the date of their arrival. They must also have evidence of a future vaccine booking.
- Workers whose temporary medical exemption from receiving their third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine has expired now have a deadline of two weeks following the expiry date of the medical exemption.

The Premier's media release is available [here](#).

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