

Statement

The Hon Dan Andrews MP
Premier



Sunday, 2 August 2020

STATEMENT ON CHANGES TO REGIONAL RESTRICTIONS

From the outset of this second surge, our aim has been to protect regional communities. By putting a ring around the city, we want to protect the entirety of our state.

For the most part, it's worked. But as we know, this virus doesn't discriminate, and its only goal is to spread.

Based on the current numbers, it's clear there is a real and growing threat in some regional communities.

The thought of this virus getting into regional aged care – and wiping out entire generations within our regional communities – is something that keeps me up at night. I know I'm not alone.

We cannot let this virus tear through regional aged care in the way it has with private sector aged care in Melbourne.

We cannot let it mean more Victorians in hospital beds. More Victorians hooked up to machines just to breathe.

And more Victorians – more grandparents, parents, sons, daughters, partners and loved ones – choked to death by an invisible enemy.

That's not something I'm willing to accept. I don't think it's something any of us are willing to accept.

We must do more. We must go harder. It's the only way we'll get to the other side of this.

It's why from 6pm tonight, Victoria will enter a State of Disaster. We used this same provision over summer, and as we step-up our fight against this public health bushfire, we need to use it again.

This will give our police additional powers to make sure people are complying with public health directions – more on which we'll have to say in the coming days.

And from 11:59pm on Wednesday, regional Victoria will return to Stage 3 "Stay at Home" restrictions.

That means there'll again only be four reasons to be out: shopping for food and essential items. Care and caregiving. Daily exercise. Work and study – if you can't do it from home.

Otherwise, you need to stay home.

Businesses in regional Victoria will also return to Stage 3 restrictions.

That means restaurants and cafes can only offer delivery and takeaway. Beauty and personal services will need to close. Entertainment and cultural venues will need to close. Community sport will need to stop.

This we'll be tough for these businesses and their workers – and we'll have more to say very shortly about extra support to help get you through.

Face coverings will continue to be compulsory – ensuring that if we do have to be out, it's in the safest way possible.

The question I know most parents will be asking: regional schools will return to remote and flexible learning – across all year levels and across the state. The only exception will be for our specialist schools.

Onsite supervision will again be made available for students who need it, including children whose parents are permitted workers and vulnerable kids who can't learn from home.

We know this will be a significant ask of parents with little ones – and big ones too. But I promise, as a parent to three, it's an ask I don't make lightly.

For information about coronavirus, please visit www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au or phone 1800 675 398

These changes will be in place for at least the next six weeks. As always, we'll keep reviewing and realigning the restrictions in line with the advice of our health experts – and if we can change things earlier, we will.

I know there'll also be questions about why restrictions are needed in some communities that have no cases.

But as we've learnt over the course of thing, just because you have no cases today – doesn't mean you won't tomorrow. And when the cost of failure is measured in lives, it's a risk we cannot afford to take.

I've had the job of leading this state for almost six years – more than 2000 days. And today is by far the hardest day – and the hardest decision.

But it is the decision I've made to keep our state safe.

The whole way through this, I promised to be upfront. So I'll say this now. This will be imperfect. And for a little while, there'll be more questions than answers.

It's why I'm asking something else of Victorians – please be calm, please be kind, please be patient.

I understand people will feel scared and sad and worried.

But we are Victorians – and we will get through this as Victorians. With grit, with guts and together.

All the temporary sacrifices we make now – all the time missed with mates, those delayed visits to mum – those sacrifices will help keep our mates and our mums and our fellow Victorians safe.

We can – we will – get through this.

Apart. But together.