

BULLETIN

Workplace Relations



Reference No: Lockdown extended/dh-8-21

Date issued: 11/08/2021

Lockdown extended in Metropolitan Melbourne until 11:59pm Thursday 19 August 2021

The Victorian Premier has today [announced](#) that the 7-day Snap Lockdown will be extended for **Metropolitan Melbourne until 11:59pm Thursday 19 August 2021**. Accordingly, within Metropolitan Melbourne, there remain five reasons for people to leave their home:

- getting necessary goods or services
- care or other compassionate reasons
- exercise (up to 2 hours per day)
- authorised work and permitted education if it can't be done from home
- to get vaccinated at the nearest possible location (and other specified reasons).

The limitation on exercise and shopping will be **five kilometres from home** – or the closest location (if not within the five kilometre radius).

Members are reminded that the following automotive industry businesses can continue to operate through this extended lockdown in **Metropolitan Melbourne** as **authorised providers and workers**:

- Petrol stations, including a petrol station that sells groceries
- Vehicle and mechanical repair services
- Contactless 'Click and collect/deliver' services
- Emergency repair workers
- Roadside assistance services
- Ancillary and support businesses, where necessary for the operations of an authorised provider
- Administrative services provided by an employer to enable its employees to work from home – e.g. payroll and IT services
- Truck stops and roadhouses, but not the provision of seated dining or shower facilities to persons who are not transport, freight or logistics drivers.

For members operating in **Regional Victoria**, the only change to the setting outlined in our previous [Bulletin](#), is the **new requirement for residents of the cross-border community to obtain a permit to travel between Victoria and NSW from 6pm, Friday 13 August 2021**. Residents will be able to apply for a permit from tomorrow afternoon through the Services Victoria [website](#).

Face coverings

Must be carried at all times and **worn indoors and outdoors** except if at home, or when visiting an intimate partner's place of residence or if an exemption applies.

Density quotients

For the above workplaces that are authorised to remain open during the lockdown, density quotients in shared spaces and publicly accessible areas at the work premises of **1 person per 4 square metres**.

QR Code Requirements

The electronic record keeping requirements through **Victorian Government QR Code Service** will continue to apply for those businesses that are eligible to continue operating, including the requirements to make reasonable efforts to ensure people check-in and to prominently display signage at each entrance so that members of the public can check-in.

COVIDSafe Plan

VACC recommends that COVIDSafe Plans should be reviewed to ensure it remains current and that cleaning, signage, record-keeping and other applicable requirements are being adhered to and communicated with all relevant staff. Members are encouraged to contact the VACC OHSE Unit for any further information or assistance, including in relation to their [COVIDSafe Plan obligations](#) on 9829 1265.

VACC also provides the following advice on frequently asked questions:

Can I stand down employees?

Members who are unable to operate as a result of the lockdown extension, are advised to consult with affected employees about taking **paid annual leave, long service leave, or unpaid leave** during this period. VACC advises a similar approach may be taken by businesses who are unable to provide employees with their usual ordinary hours of work, as a result of the lockdown.

Where agreement is reached, a written record of the employee's request to take leave must be kept.

If agreement is unable to be reached and the business is unable to operate as a result of the lockdown, the employer is entitled to **stand down** the employee without pay.

Workers who suffer a reduction in hours as a result of a lockdown that commenced from 6 August 2021, will be able to access the increased payment amount of **\$750** for individuals that lose **20 hours or more** of work, and **\$450** for individuals that lose between **8 and 20 hours** of work, through the **Australian Government's COVID-19 Disaster Payment scheme**. No liquid asset eligibility test will apply, with applications to be made through [Services Australia](#).

Whilst members can access a **Reduction in Hours** template letter [here](#) and a **Stand Down** template letter [here](#), members considering implementing such arrangements are encouraged to contact our Industrial Relations experts on 03 9829 1123 or ir@vacc.com.au for further advice and assistance.

What entitlements apply for employees required to self-isolate/quarantine?

Employees who have visited a location at the date and time where a COVID-19 case has visited – may be required by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to get tested and quarantine, despite not feeling unwell or not having any symptoms.

An employee is entitled to paid **personal/carer's leave only** in circumstances where they are unfit for work due to personal illness or injury – or in relation to carer's leave, where they are required to provide care or support to a member of the employee's immediate family or household – because of a personal illness or injury affecting the member, or an unexpected emergency affecting the member. Therefore, an employee who is required to quarantine is **not entitled** to paid personal/carer's leave **unless** they meet these requirements.

Where the employee has sufficient **annual leave (or long service leave)** accrued, an employer may approve this request. In certain circumstances an employer might also consider agreeing to a request for annual leave in advance (i.e. prior to the leave having been accrued). Such an agreement must be in writing and meet a number of requirements. It is therefore recommended that members considering granting leave in advance contact the IR Department for further information.

Where neither paid personal/carer's leave nor annual leave is appropriate, the employer may approve a period of **unpaid leave** for the employee. In such circumstances it is important to note that employees required to self-isolate or quarantine by DHHS may be eligible for the **Australian Government's \$1,500 Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment and/or the Victorian Government's \$450 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Test Isolation Payment**. Employees seeking further information on eligibility requirements can be directed to [Services Australia](#) and the [DHHS](#).

What financial support is available to affected businesses?

COVIDSafe Deep Cleaning Rebate

The COVIDSafe Deep Cleaning Rebate is available for eligible small and medium-sized Victorian businesses, where anyone suspected or confirmed to have coronavirus (COVID-19) has been on the premises or worksite when they may have been infectious. The rebate aims to help eligible businesses cover the cost of hiring professional cleaning services to conduct a 'deep clean' or 'decontamination clean' of their premises or worksite, by covering **up to 80 per cent** of the cleaning costs at each worksite, capped at a grant of **\$10,000**. Member can access more information on the eligibility criteria [here](#).

Business Costs Assistance Program

Under Round 3 of the program, a grant of **\$2,800** will be paid to businesses that remain impacted by capacity limits placed on businesses by necessary public health restrictions. Recipients must have received or been eligible for the previous Business Cost Assistance Program. As previously advised, eligible businesses will include non-essential retailers, and will be based on eligible ANZSIC classes. Details of those ANZSIC classes can be accessed [here](#). For those businesses who previously received payments through the Program, the payment will be made automatically.

Small Business COVID Hardship Fund

For small businesses that are not eligible under existing business support funds, the new Fund will enable those with a payroll of up to \$10 million who have experienced a **70 per cent or greater reduction in revenue**, to apply for grants of up to **\$8,000**. VACC will provide a further update to members when more detail on the eligibility and application requirements are released.

Commercial Tenancy Relief Scheme and Landlord Hardship Fund

The Scheme is available to businesses with an annual turnover of less than \$50 million and have had a **decline in turnover of at least 30 per cent** in recent weeks. Landlords will be required to provide proportional rent relief in line with a business's reduction in turnover. For example, a business with a turnover of 40 per cent of pre-pandemic levels can only be charged 40 per cent of its rent. Of the balance, at least half must be waived, with the remainder to be deferred. Affected landlords will be entitled to **land tax relief of up to 25 per cent**, with small landlords who can demonstrate acute hardship also eligible to apply for payments as part of a \$20 million hardship fund. Landlords cannot lock out or evict tenants without a determination from the Victorian Small Business Commission (VSBC) while the Scheme is operating. Tenants and landlords can contact the VSBC for further information on 13 87 22 or vsbc.vic.gov.au

VACC will continue to keep members advised of developments. Members needing further advice or assistance are encouraged to contact VACC's Workplace Relations team on 03 9829 1123.

Daniel Hodges
Executive Manager – Workplace Relations
Industrial Relations | OHSE