

# Media Release

**The Hon Martin Foley MP**  
Minister for Health  
Minister for Ambulance Services  
Minister for Equality



Tuesday, 22 February 2022

## A SAFE AND SENSIBLE RETURN TO THE OFFICE AS MASK RULES EASE

As hospitalisation rates decline and third dose vaccination rates increase, a number of sensible changes to pandemic orders and public health recommendations in Victoria will come into place at 11:59pm on Friday 25 February 2022.

The public health recommendation for Victorians to work or study from home will be removed, while masks will no longer be needed in most indoor settings.

Masks will only be required indoors in the following circumstances, unless an exemption applies:

- People on public transport, in taxis and rideshare, on planes, and indoors at an airport
- People working or visiting hospitals, and indoor areas at care facilities
- Workers in hospitality, retail and the court system
- Workers at justice and correctional facilities
- Students in year 3 or above at primary school, and workers at early childhood centres and primary schools (masks can be removed in secondary school)
- People working indoors at an event with more than 30,000 people attending
- In special circumstances, such as if you have COVID-19 or are a close contact and you're leaving home

Masks are recommended for other workers serving or facing members of the public, such as if you are at reception, meeting guests or serving customers.

Following a further assessment of hospitalisation rates and workforce pressures, the remaining restrictions on elective surgery will lift on Monday, 28 February 2022.

Public hospitals will be able to resume all surgery, with capacity to be based on an individual assessment of staff availability and COVID-19 demands. Private hospitals will be able to resume up to 100 per cent of pre-COVID activity.

The Minister for Health will also declare a number of temporary exceptions and deadline extensions for workers required to receive three doses of the COVID-19 vaccine:

- The third dose deadline for workers in education facilities who were fully vaccinated on or before October 25 will be extended by a month, provided that workers have a booking within that time – meaning all education workers have until 25 March to be 'up to date'
- Fully vaccinated workers who aren't yet eligible for a third dose will have a third dose deadline of three months and two weeks from when they had their second dose
- Workers who are recent international arrivals will have a new third dose deadline of four weeks from the date of their arrival, provided they have evidence of a future vaccine booking
- Workers whose temporary medical exemption (e.g., because they had COVID-19) has expired will have a new third dose deadline of two weeks following the expiry of the medical exemption

Further details on the new restrictions coming into place will be published online at [www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au](http://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au) from 11:59pm on 25 February.

## **Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Martin Foley**

*“Victorians have done such a great job getting vaccinated, so we’re able to take safe steps to get more people to return to the office.”*

*“We’re balancing the need to support our health system with the benefits of easing restrictions in a careful and sensible way.”*