NSW and Victoria remove 72-hour isolation requirement for international arrivals

nsw.gov.au/media-releases/72-hour-isolation

Published: 17 Dec 2021

Released by: The Premier

Listen | Focus

International travelers and aircrew arriving in Sydney and Melbourne will no longer need to isolate for 72 hours, with New South Wales and Victoria agreeing to introduce consistent COVID-19 requirements for people arriving from overseas.

From the beginning of Tuesday, 21 December all fully vaccinated international travellers and flight crew arriving in NSW and Victoria will be required to get a PCR test within 24 hours after arrival and isolate until they receive a negative result. Under existing arrangements, they are also required to produce a negative pre-departure test, within three days of boarding their flight.

Previously, all fully vaccinated international arrivals in both NSW and Victoria had to get a test as soon as possible and isolate for 72 hours regardless of when they received their negative test result.

The 72-hour isolation period is no longer required, and those arrivals and aircrew already in isolation may leave once they receive a negative PCR test. NSW arrivals must also comply with the NSW Health Guidelines for Recent Fully Vaccinated Arrivals and get a follow-up test on Day 6 after their arrival. Arrivals in Victoria must also get a PCR test between days five and seven after arrival.

Any passengers arriving from overseas into NSW and Victoria aged 18 years and over who are not considered fully vaccinated must still go directly into 14-day mandatory hotel quarantine.

With both states achieving high double vaccination rates and rapidly rolling out booster vaccination programs, the introduction of new streamlined arrivals processes will simplify and clarify the process for travellers, airlines and airports.

New South Wales Premier Dominic Perrottet said the removal of the isolation requirement would make the process easier for international travellers and help keep flight crew in the air.

"We know it has been a challenging time for international travel with new rules and the emergence of the Omicron variant, but this announcement is about simplifying the process and making sure Australia's two biggest cities have a consistent approach," Mr Perrottet said.

"This decision has been made with safety remaining the top priority, which is why all arrivals must return a negative PCR test before they can exit isolation and have an additional test following that."

After consultation and advice from the CHO and public health experts, the Minister for Health Martin Foley made the decision to change the requirements for international travellers arriving in Victoria.

Acting Victorian Premier James Merlino said the change would make it easier for international travellers arriving back in Victoria and New South Wales, while ensuring the community is protected as we learn to live with COVID-19 and new variants.

"With more than 92 per cent of Victorians 12 years and older double-vaccinated, Victorians have given themselves the strongest chance of living safely with coronavirus and enjoying more freedoms this festive season, while we continue to monitor the Omicron variant," Mr Merlino said.

Those eligible for a booster five months after their second shot and are urged to book an appointment as soon as possible – especially those at higher risk of contracting coronavirus, such as healthcare workers.

From 10 January 2022, children five to 11 years old will also be eligible for vaccination.

The NSW Government has increased penalties for non-compliance with the isolation, testing and quarantine requirements remain, with individuals facing fines up to $5,000 and $10,000 for corporations.