



▲ Daniel Andrews announces five-day 'circuit breaker' as Victoria goes into Covid lockdown - video

Victoria

Snap five-day Covid lockdown for Victoria announced in bid to contain UK variant

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Victoria will enter a “circuit-breaker” five-day lockdown from Saturday in an attempt to “prevent a third wave”, [Daniel Andrews](#) has announced.

The premier said on Friday afternoon the government would impose a snap lockdown from midnight because the “hyper-infectivity” and speed of a UK variant outbreak had created a “very real challenge”.

Andrews said this meant authorities had to assume there were “further cases in the community than we have positive results for” and the virus was “moving at a velocity that has not been seen anywhere in our country over the course of these past 12 months”.

“Today’s announcements are not about dealing with a third wave, they are about making the difficult choices to prevent a third wave,” the premier said.

The Labor leader said Victorians would only be able to leave their homes for four permitted reasons: shopping for essential items, essential work, exercise for two hours a day, or caregiving for compassionate reasons.

Other restrictions include compulsory masks in all settings outside the home, a 5km radius ban on movement, and a ban on all private gatherings. “You won’t be able to have visitors to your home,” Andrews said.

Venues to close include schools and universities, which will transition to home-learning, as well as hairdressing and beauty services and sport and recreational venues. Hospitality will move to takeaway only.

All non-essential retail will also close, however essential businesses such as supermarkets, bottle shops and pharmacies will stay open over the five days.

Funerals will be limited to 10 people and weddings must be postponed, the premier said.

“I know this is not the news that Victorians want to hear today. I know it’s not the place that we wanted to be in.

“However, we’ve all given so much, we’ve all done so much. We’ve built something precious, and we have to make difficult decisions, and do difficult things, in order to defend what we’ve built. I am confident that this short, sharp circuit-breaker will be effective.”

Despite the outbreak being limited to metropolitan [Melbourne](#), Andrews said the rules would apply to the whole state to avoid the new variant spreading to the regions.

He said authorities would not have time to establish a “ring of steel” between Melbourne and regional Victoria given the lockdown was “not a long-term thing”.

“Therefore, it’s appropriate to have the same rules apply across the whole state,” he said. “It’s to keep, frankly, Melburnians and potentially the virus out of regional Victoria.”

The Australian Open, which had been capped at 30,000 capacity, [will continue without spectators](#).

Asked if Victorians would consider it incongruous that they could not leave their homes while the tennis continued, Andrews said: “There are no fans, there are no crowds. These people essentially are at their workplace. The minimum number of staff for it to be run safely - not just for the virus but other reasons - will be there.”

The health minister, Martin Foley, said visitors would also be banned from aged care homes and restrictions would be placed on hospital visits.

The snap lockdown is a response to an [outbreak at the Holiday Inn hotel quarantine facility](#), which has now reached 13 cases, all confirmed to be the UK variant. The outbreak is believed to have been caused by a nebuliser - an [aerosol-based medical device](#).

The state's chief health officer, Prof Brett Sutton, said although the "test, trace and isolate" program was working, the virus was moving so fast that sometimes contact tracers only identified people after they were infectious.

"That means there are exposure sites where people have been with this super-infectious variant, and that becomes a danger for widespread transmission," he said. "This circuit breaker - and, again, nobody wants all the consequences of a circuit breaker - but the alternative is potentially devastating."

Late on Thursday night, authorities identified a Brunetti's cafe at terminal 4 of Melbourne airport as an exposure site, prompting further fears about the possibility of community transmission.

This was later expanded to include the entire terminal 4 building, meaning anyone who attended on 9 February between 4.45am and 2pm must get a test and remain isolated for 14 days.

"You must isolate. You must get tested. You must contact us," Victoria's testing commander, Jeroen Weimar, said. "Stay isolated for 14 days. It's critical that we run this to ground now, that we stop it here."

The prime minister, Scott Morrison, said before Andrews' press conference that he hoped for a "proportionate response".

He declined to elaborate, saying he'd wait for the premier's announcement, but emphasised that "proportionate responses" were "offered in other states".

Queensland and Western Australia have recently imposed snap lockdowns in response to outbreaks stemming from hotel quarantine programs.

Andrews cited those decisions in his announcement, saying the "same response" had worked in those states.

Before the Victorian announcement, Melbourne-based federal parliamentarians were

advised to fly to Canberra by midnight to avoid being caught up in any border restrictions that would subsequently be announced.

NSW [Health](#) said it was in the process of contacting 7,000 people who had entered the state after attending exposure sites in Victoria, including terminal 4 at Melbourne airport.

The health department announced late on Friday night that anyone who entered the state from Victoria from Saturday must “remain at their home or place of residence for the five-day period announced by the Victorian government”.

“The border between NSW and Victoria will remain open,” the NSW premier, Gladys Berejiklian, said in a statement.

The state’s health department had previously said anyone who had arrived into NSW from Victoria since 29 January was required to stay at home for five days but that date was “updated following advice from the NSW chief health officer”.

South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania and the ACT responded to the news out of Melbourne by announcing they would shut their borders to anyone from Victoria. Queensland and the NT responded to the snap lockdown by imposing border restrictions on greater Melbourne.

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