



31 March 2022 – Coronavirus (COVID-19) health alert



31 March 2022 – Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV) health alert

Ministers

Department of Health

Australia's biosecurity emergency pandemic measures to end

Following medical advice, the Biosecurity Emergency Determination relating to COVID-19 for Australia will not be renewed when it lapses on April 17.

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Following medical advice, the Biosecurity Emergency Determination relating to COVID-19 for Australia will not be renewed when it lapses on April 17.

I am taking this decision now so as to provide forward guidance based on the advice of the Professor Paul Kelly, the Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer.

The emergency period was a crucial early decision in Australia's pandemic response. It has saved tens of thousands of lives as Australia avoided some of the worst outcomes from the early spread of the virus and now has one of the highest vaccination rates in the world.

As Australia moves towards living with COVID-19, the following emergency measures will also lapse:

- negative pre-departure tests for travellers entering Australia.
- restrictions on the entry of cruise vessels into and within Australian territory – announced on 15 March – will lapse on 17 April 2022.
- price gouging rules on rapid antigen tests – supply is strong and to date, more than 509 million RATs have arrived in Australia. The ACCC will still closely monitor the supply of RATs to ensure price gouging does not occur.

International travellers into and out of Australia will still be required to provide proof of double vaccination against COVID-19. Travellers will also still be required to wear a mask while on international flights based on medical advice. These measures will be implemented under the non-emergency provisions in the Biosecurity Act. The requirements for maritime arrivals will also be aligned with those on airlines, as part of the safety protocols for the resumption of cruising.

The Morrison Government has taken strong action over the course of the pandemic to protect Australians. Shutting the international borders early was a tough but decisive action, which enabled Australia to manage the pandemic and minimise the loss of life.

We thank Australians for their resilience, their cooperation, and their understanding in following the medical advice which has kept us safe.

The past two years have been challenging, but we have shown the best of Australia - people caring for each other, working from home, home schooling, and importantly being vaccinated.

The COVID-19 and Influenza Winter Plan will ensure our health system is prepared, and despite an increase in the past week of cases due to the Omicron variant, hospital admissions and ICU cases have not had the same increase. This is a promising sign.

Through the pandemic, the Biosecurity Act has been used for:

- managing Australia's inbound and outbound travellers (from March 2020 to April 2022), including through pausing international arrivals from high-risk countries (May and December 2021) and determining information and declaration requirements for travellers (throughout the pandemic)
- prohibiting the operation of retail stores at international airports to prevent the spread of COVID-19 from travellers who had not yet completed quarantine into the general community (March 2020 – November 2021)
- mitigating the spread of COVID-19 in remote Indigenous communities and vulnerable neighbouring countries (throughout the pandemic as required),
- ensuring the accessibility and affordability of personal protective equipment (March 2020 – February 2021); and
- implementing enhanced business as usual arrangements such as targeted ill traveller screening processes, communications and pre-arrival reporting requirements for vessels (throughout the pandemic).

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