



Building & Construction Industry COVID-19 Update Tuesday 27th July 2021

Update on Positive Cases and Outbreaks

There were 10 new locally acquired positive cases reported in Victoria yesterday with 198 active cases, all linked to the current outbreak stemming from NSW and in quarantine.

Lockdown #5 has come to an end with the announcement this morning from the Victorian government of an easing of the main restrictions from midnight tonight, 27 July – that is, the five reasons to leave home no longer apply, no travel limit, schools, retail and hospitality can re-open. Visitors to the home and crowds at the footy and public events are not permitted for a further 2 weeks. Offices can have up to 25 percent attend, but work from home if you can.

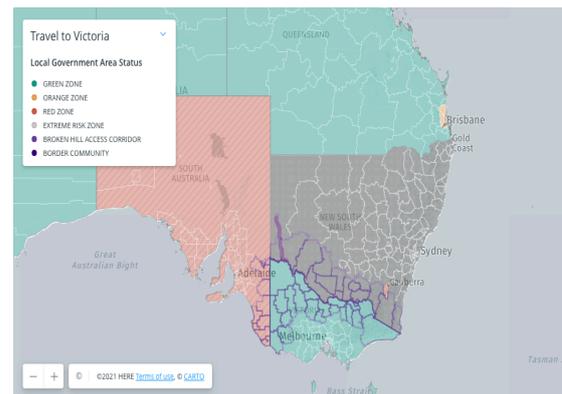
However face masks **MUST** still be carried and **WORN** indoors and outdoors and pending a check of the new Workplace Directions overnight, the current density quotient of 1 person per 4 sqm remains. These are the current settings under our Industry COVID-19 Guidelines and must be observed on all building and construction sites.

There were no new positive cases in QLD and they are fairly pleased with that, hoping to open their borders to tourism as soon as possible. In NSW however, the situation continues to worry the government with stubborn positive numbers – 172 today – with 60 of those circulating whilst positive in the community.

Travel Permits

All of NSW has now been declared an 'Extreme Risk Zone' – black on the map at right – meaning that from 9pm 9 July entry to Victoria is highly restricted to persons with a Specified Worker Permit, transit permit or an exemption.

South Australia is still a Red Travel Zone. There are still Orange zones for Greater Brisbane and Sunshine Coast, but not the Gold Coast.



Personal Temperature Testing Devices (article reprinted from the Herald Sun 26/7)

Deakin University has completed a world-first trial in bid to boost the Covid-safe credentials of the nation's \$360bn construction industry. Construction workers from Geelong's GHMBA construction site and CSL in Melbourne wore four different wearable sensors during a three-week period between June and July.

Most Australian construction workers have their temperature tested with an infrared thermometer prior to entering a construction site. But, lead researcher Dr Farnad Nasirzadeh said the wearable sensors were more accurate, because they could monitor a person's temperature throughout the day.

"The personal sensors we've tested have been customised for construction workers to consider the effects of physical activities and ambient conditions on body temperature, in addition to the temperature fluctuations throughout the day," Dr Nasirzadeh said.

He said the sensors provided real-time temperature readings every minute, with the data validated by hospital grade thermometers.



Airborne Transmission and Ventilation

The following is extracted from an article written by Prof Lidia Morawska of QUT in 'The Conversation' and reprinted for information and consideration.

Australia is now in the grip of its second winter marred by the pandemic, with crippling lockdowns in multiple cities.

Earlier this month, the federal government announced a four-stage plan to bring the country back to something resembling normality. Acknowledging it will be impossible to eradicate COVID-19 completely, the plan focuses on a variety of steps — most notably vaccination — to enable the country to live with the virus.

However, if we want this plan to work, there's one crucial control measure yet to be considered: protection against airborne transmission of the infection in public indoor spaces.

We need to modernise our indoor environments to protect Australians from respiratory infections, and more broadly, from all indoor air hazards. This includes indoor exposure to pollution originating from outdoors, such as bushfire smoke.

The evidence is in

The body of scientific evidence pointing to airborne transmission as the key route by which SARS-CoV-2 spreads is now overwhelming.

Put simply, over the past 18 months, we have come to understand most people become infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 by inhaling it from shared air. The risk is predominantly indoors.

Consequently, every public building should have control measures in place to provide adequate ventilation.

But this information hasn't been communicated to Australians — many of whom remain focused on hand washing and cleaning surfaces. These are good practices, but because SARS-CoV-2 spreads predominantly through the air, they likely provide only a marginal contribution to infection control.

So how do we do it?

Appropriate building engineering controls include sufficient and effective ventilation, possibly enhanced by particle filtration and air disinfection systems. It's also important to avoid recirculating air, as well as overcrowding.

We have the technology to make these changes, and these are things that can often be implemented at low cost. But for this to happen, Australia must first recognise the significant contribution these measures make to infection control

Michael Paynter
Industry Liaison Officer Building and Construction Industry
mpaynter@peregrineindustrial.com.au

Ph 0418 268 555

(News and information in this Update is obtained from a variety of sources, including government websites, newspapers Herald Sun, The Australian, Guardian & online The News Daily. Any commentary is mine alone)