



Building & Construction Industry

COVID-19 Update 2nd December 2021

Update on Positive Cases and Outbreaks

Victoria continues to record stubbornly high numbers of positive cases, offset by an equally high percentage of persons over 16 years being double vaccinated. We are seeing a proportionate number of positive cases in the building and construction industry, averaging about 10 per week. These cases are all being well and self managed by the respective employers in accordance with the Department of Health Contact Assessment and Management Matrix.

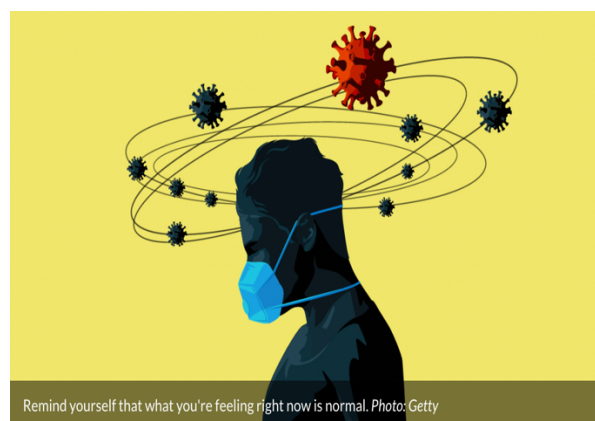
Date Reported	Positive Cases	Active Cases	First Vax %	Second Vax %
Today 2 Dec	1,419	12,728	93.3%	90.9%

This situation is likely to continue for some time yet, as predicted by the Burnett Institute's modelling. The Department of Health is urging employers to maintain the recommended measures to combat COVID-19, in accordance with their COVIDSafe Plans and of course, the Industry COVID-19 Guidelines.

And now the latest on OMICRON - a new 'variant of concern'. The simple facts are that the Health Authorities around the world just don't know enough about it yet – that is, whether the health effects are any different or more severe than any other strain. They do believe however, that OMICRON is even more transmissible than the Delta variant, so that can't be good news in terms of other disruptions and impacts on our lives. For example, in Victoria any close contacts of a confirmed or suspected Omicron case will have to isolate for 14 days, regardless of vaccination status. There are currently 7 cases of Omicron COVID-19 in Australia at present (6 in NSW and 1 in NT), but we have seen before how just one case of the Delta variant spread through Sydney and then into Victoria in June/July this year.

But before we let our heads get into a spin about this, please consider:

- 1 We don't know much about OMICRON yet. For instance, how does it affect vaccinated versus unvaccinated people?
- 2 In Australia, over 87% of the population over 16 years are FULLY vaccinated. In Victoria, the percentage is even higher – 91%
- 3 Many people are feeling frustrated or anxious about more Coronavirus talk. This is understandable and normal.
- 4 Take a break from the news and social media – don't overdo it and look forward to the coming holiday season



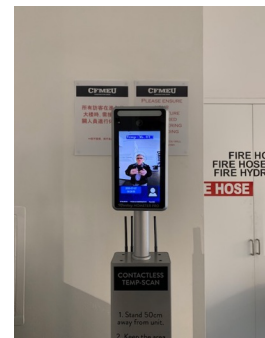
Remind yourself that what you're feeling right now is normal. Photo: Getty

Temperature Testing

Recently, the Department of Health has issued new guidance on Temperature Testing as a measure to minimise COVID-19 risk at the workplace. The Department does not recommend temperature testing for workplaces that are NOT high risk (in a COVID-19 sense), which includes the building and construction industry. Essentially there are concerns about the use of temperature testing equipment, training of the operators and that temperature testing is not a replacement for important public health measures such as staying away if unwell, physical distancing etc.

On the other hand, employers can choose to use temperature testing as an additional measure and as a reminder to watch out for symptoms and to exclude workers with a fever from entering the workplace.

Many employers have installed automatic temperature testing stations as part of a comprehensive site entry process which may include the health screening questions and QR Code check-ins. In these circumstances, it would seem appropriate to maintain those systems for the reasons outlined above, however that is the choice of each individual employer.



Accordingly, Revision 16 of the Industry COVID-19 Guidelines will be amended in section 3.18 to remove the mandatory use of temperature testing in large scale construction.

Vaccination Boosters

It's probably a bit early for most of us, but booster vaccinations are now available. See latest advice from Department of Health below:

Latest updates on COVID-19 vaccination

Key points

Who can get a booster dose now?

- Anyone aged 18 and over who had their second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine more than six months ago is encouraged to get a COVID-19 booster now.
- Those who completed a primary vaccination course overseas with a COVID-19 vaccine recognised by the Therapeutic Goods Administration can also get a booster dose now.
- A COVID-19 booster dose helps maintain protection against COVID-19 and prevent waning immunity.
- Most people will receive the Pfizer vaccine as their booster dose.
- Although not preferred, AstraZeneca (Vaxzervria) can be used as a booster dose for those who had AstraZeneca for their first two doses, and those who had a previous reaction to an mRNA vaccine.
- Booster doses are different from third primary doses, which are to help immunosuppressed people obtain the same level of protection as the general population. Find out more at [who can get vaccinated](#).
- Read more about boosters in the [ATAGI announcement](#).

Booster doses can now be booked online

- COVID-19 booster doses are available from GPs and pharmacists and you can find one near you using [Service Finder \(healthdirect.gov.au\)](#). Boosters are also available at Victorian [vaccination centres](#).
- Anyone can call the Coronavirus Hotline on 1800 675 398 or use the [online booking system](#) to book a booster dose appointment, or walk-in to a [vaccination centre](#).
- Those who haven't yet had their second dose can now book their second and booster doses at the same time using the [online booking system](#).
- Australian Immunisation Records are updated after a booster (or third primary dose for those who are severely immunocompromised). Digital certificates will show the last two COVID-19 vaccinations.

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