

## COVID Update – 9 October 2021

Categories : [COVID19](#)

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The numbers continued to fall this week, as we push toward the reopening of Greater Sydney. Next Monday, 11 October 2021, stay at home orders will be lifted for those who are vaccinated, allowing more things like spending time with friends and family and gathering in larger groups outside.

At the time of writing, NSW is hitting the 90% vaccination milestone for first doses in people over the age of 16, meaning that the state is on track to being almost fully vaccinated before the end of the year. Despite these numbers, there is always the need to remain diligent in our workplaces. Even with vaccination, infection with COVID requires a 14 day isolation period, and currently the same applies for close contacts.

We have been informed that the definition of a “close contact” will be changed in the coming weeks to differentiate between the vaccinated and non-vaccinated. Stay tuned for more updates in that space.

During the week, the NSW Government announced changes to the relaxing of restrictions on Monday. They are in summary:

- All school students will return to classrooms by 25 October. Some students will begin on 18 October.
- Indoor pools will open from Monday for swimming lessons, training and rehabilitation;
- Caps on weddings and funerals will lift to 100 from Monday, and will lift further when NSW reaches 80 per cent double-vaccinated (expected later in October);
- Indoor gatherings will be capped at 10 people from Monday, not counting children under 12. Outdoor gatherings will be lifted to 30 people;
- When the state hits 80% fully vaccinated, masks will no longer be required in offices.

- Also at 80%, larger gatherings will be allowed in homes and at weddings and funerals.

As we come out of an extended lockdown, the uncertainty of COVID continues. A new public health order (PHO) is due to be released over this weekend. There is no guessing what it will contain, however it is intended to put the above easing of restrictions into a PHO. As we have seen in past iterations of PHOs, they are unpredictable and often arbitrary. We will, as usual, ensure that we provide members with any updates affecting them at work as soon as practicable.

On Wednesday, Transport for NSW sent an email to all staff in the Transport cluster regarding “COVID Safety Controls” and the way that employers would be dealing with the inevitable dramatic rise in cases once society begins to interact again. It is unclear exactly what is intended by this move by Transport, but during questioning in a meeting on Friday, a transport representative stated that the controls would involve a focus on vaccination and testing.

The issue of introducing new COVID controls has now been raised with the Union on two occasions, however we have not yet been told what those controls will be or given the opportunity to contribute the expertise of our frontline members on what these controls look like or how they will operate. Our position has been that Transport should be consulting with each and every frontline worker and their HSRs.

Any controls put in place need to ensure that members can continue their important frontline work, while at the same time ensuring all of our health and safety in the workplace, particularly those more vulnerable in our ranks. Testing regimes are vital in whatever controls are put in place to keep us all safe.