



## Social distancing rules explained: Australia's current state by state coronavirus guidelines

Several states have already started relaxing physical distancing laws, while others are holding firm, but when will they end? Find out what's illegal and what happens if you break the law

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Since the pandemic was declared all Australian states went into various levels of lockdown.

On Friday 8 May, the federal government announced a three-stage plan to ease coronavirus restrictions across the country, with the goal of reaching stage three by July. Ultimately, though, it is up to each state and territory to decide when and how far they would be relaxing restrictions in the coming months.

The states and territories have already announced their plans in response.

So what are the laws as they currently stand?

These are the laws as of Wednesday 20 May. This article will be updated as new restrictions are implemented or repealed.

## **Queensland**

Under the current regulations in Queensland, up to five adults from different households are allowed to visit another home. These rules come under the first stage of the state government's three-stage plan to ease restrictions.

Queenslanders are now allowed to shop for non-essential items. Picnics and weekend drives are allowed and national parks have reopened. Residents are now allowed to travel up to 150km from your home for recreational purposes, but cannot enter the "Outback" unless they live there.

Those who live in Outback Queensland, defined here, can travel up to 500km within the Outback for recreational reasons, and can stay for multiple nights away from their place of residence given how far they may be travelling.

As of 3 April, interstate travel is still closed to everyone except residents and essential workers, including freight carriers and emergency workers. Barriers are still erected in the Gold Coast suburb of Coolangatta, which straddles both Queensland and NSW. There are some exemptions for those who regularly cross the Queensland-NSW border for work.

Up to 10 people can gather outside. This means that groups of 10 or less can engage in outdoor non-contact sport, group training and boot camps, and picnics. Queenslanders can also go to the park, playground, skatepark, or national park for recreational purposes.

Weddings are allowed 10 guests, and funerals 20 guests indoors and 30 outdoors.

Beauty salons can open back up, and pubs and cafes in regional or rural areas with no cases are able to seat up to 20 people. Open homes will also be allowed.

The second stage of relaxing restrictions will start on 12 June, and see gatherings of up to 20 people; indoor cinemas, entertainment venues and amusement parks reopening; and greater recreational travel distances allowed.

Stage three will start on 10 July. While premier Annastacia Palaszczuk said details are "subject to further planning and review", intrastate and interstate travel will be permitted, and a maximum of 100 people allowed to gather in homes, public spaces, and other venues including cinemas, places of worship, and restaurants.

Queensland police officers are still able to issue on-the-spot fines of \$1,334.50 for individuals and \$6,672.50 for corporations who breach these laws. The maximum penalties available through the courts are 10 times those amounts.

## **New South Wales**

As of Friday 15 May, up to five adults are allowed to visit another person's home in NSW. There is no limit the number of guests someone is allowed per day as long as there are no more than five at a time.

There is no limit on how far someone can travel to visit another household under this rule. You are still not allowed to travel to regional or rural areas for a holiday, but this restriction will be lifted on 1 June.

Art galleries, libraries and museums will also reopen on 1 June.

From Friday, public gatherings of up to 10 people, or members of the same household, are also allowed. Outdoor playground and exercise equipment can also now be used, with caution, and outdoor pools are open.

Berejiklian has encouraged retail stores to reopen, as long as physical distancing is maintained. Cafes, restaurants and pubs can seat 10 diners at any one time, as long as they allow for four square metres per person. They must also ensure there are 1.5 metres between patrons.

Weddings can now have up to 10 guests, in addition to those conducting the service, a photographer, a videographer and the couple. Up to 20 mourners can attend indoor funerals, and outdoor funerals can have up to 30.

Religious gatherings and places of worship can also invite up to 10 worshippers inside at a time.

Movement is also allowed for the purpose of moving into a new home or inspecting a potential new home, providing care or assistance to a vulnerable person or in an emergency, and undertaking legal obligations, accessing government services, or donating blood. Exemptions also exist for priests or members of religious orders, and where someone is escaping potential injury, illness or harm.

People who are learning to drive can continue to learn to drive and get their hours logged.

Children who live across two households can continue to switch between houses.

Police have been out on the streets enforcing these rules.

It has been left to police officers' discretion who will receive a fine, however all fines are reviewed personally by the police commissioner, Mick Fuller.

## **Victoria**

Currently, residents can only leave the house for one of five essential reasons. These are:

Shopping for food or other essential goods and services

Work and education

Care and compassionate reasons

Exercise

Visiting friends and family

A full breakdown of these reasons can be found [here](#).

Since midnight on Tuesday 12 May, Victorians have been allowed to have up to five guests over to their homes.

Up to 10 people can gather outside for recreational purposes and to engage in activities like hiking, jogging and other non-contact sport.

Weddings are allowed up to 10 guests. Meanwhile, up to 20 guests are able to attend funerals held indoors, or 30 if held outdoors.

Camping is still out of the question, and the premier, Daniel Andrews, said on Monday 10 May that “...Airbnb will not take bookings. There won’t be bookings at hotels”. But there is no limit on how far one can travel throughout the state.

Unlike in other states, cafes and restaurants in Victoria are still unable to seat diners under the current rules.

However, Premier Daniel Andrews announced in May that from 1 June, Victorian cafes, restaurants, and the dining areas of pubs and clubs will be allowed to reopen and host up to 20 patrons at a time indoors.

Three weeks later, on 22 June, the number of people allowed will increase to 50 patrons, and go up to 100 patrons by mid-July. Premier Andrews said that patrons will still need to abide by physical distancing rules.

Police officers are responsible for deciding who will receive penalties.

Penalties include on-the-spot fines of up to \$1,652 for individuals and \$9,913 for businesses. Larger fines and even the possibility of criminal charges are also available.

## **Tasmania**

From Monday 11 May, the Tasmanian government has eased a number of coronavirus restrictions to allow:

20 people to attend funerals, up from 10

One aged care visit per week, from none

National parks to reopen for exercise, but only for people who live within 30km

People only allowed to leave their homes for essential reasons and gatherings limited to two people. Exemptions include:

Shopping for supplies

Undertaking personal exercise

Attending medical or healthcare appointments

Seeking veterinary services

Providing social support or care to another person

Attending school or study, if unable to be done at home

Attending work or volunteering, if unable to be done at home

Performing essential maintenance or security inspections of other premises owned or occupied by the person

Attending another location if the person has a reasonable excuse in the opinion of the director of public health

An example of a “reasonable excuse” given by the premier’s office was clearing out a recently deceased relative’s house.

Households are allowed to have two visitors as long as physical distancing requirements can be met, except where “social support” is being provided. Tasmania has a broad definition of “social support. As such, families and couples who live apart can visit one another’s homes.

However, in public, the two-person gathering limit is strictly applied.

From 18 May, Tasmania will move to stage one, which will mean indoor and outdoor gatherings of up to 10 people, up to five visitors to a home, and up to 10 people inside restaurants, cafe and other venues.

The premier confirmed that the state's strict border controls will remain in place.

From 25 May, primary school students will return to school, as well as year 11 and 12 students. From 9 June, high school students from year 7 to 10 will also return to school. And from 15 June, the state will move to stage 2, subject to health advice.

Stage two will kick off on 15 June.

Gatherings will increase to 20 people at a time, both indoor and outdoor. This means that up to 20 people will be able to attend religious gatherings and weddings, and up to 50 people will be allowed to attend a funeral.

Under stage two, people will be able to move around the state, go camping, and stay in overnight boats and holiday shacks. Gyms and bootcamps will open to 20 people, while beauty services including tattoo parlours would also be allowed.

Australian defence force members, the Tasmanian state emergency service and fire service volunteers have been enlisted to help carry out spot checks.

Fines could be as much as \$16,800 or six months in jail.

Tasmania also requires that all non-essential travellers entering the state quarantine for a period of 14 days.

## **Western Australia**

Western Australia has already seen perhaps the most significant easing of lockdown laws.

As of Monday 18 May, up to 20 people are allowed to gather publicly and privately. Residents are allowed to leave their homes for recreational activities including picnics, fishing, boating or camping.

Cafes and restaurants - including dine-in services at pubs, clubs and casinos - are allowed to seat 20 diners, as long as they follow the four sq metres per person rule.

Non-contact sport, outdoor and indoor fitness classes, and public swimming pools have been allowed to reopen to up to 20 participants at a time. The number of attendees at weddings and funerals has increased to 20 if held indoors, or 30 if outdoors.

Places of worship and community facilities, like libraries, are also allowed up to 20 people inside.

Open houses and display villages are allowed to operate, however public playgrounds, skateparks and outdoor gym equipment are closed.

Travel to most nearby regions is now allowed. But travel is still restricted to remote communities in the Pilbara, Goldfields, and Kimberley.

It doesn't look as though WA will be opening its borders to interstate travellers any time soon, though. As of midnight on 6 April only "exempt travellers" have been allowed in. This includes WA residents. A list of "exempt travellers" can be found here, and includes senior government officials, military personal and a range of essential workers.

McGowan said that hard borders "has been our strongest weapon in the fight against this virus" and "will likely be the final restriction that we lift".

Officers can issue on-the-spot fines of \$1,000 for individuals and \$5,000 for businesses who disobey the rules.

## **Australian Capital Territory**

As of 8 May, gatherings of up to 10 people indoors and outdoors are allowed in the ACT. That includes boot camps, picnics, house inspections and auctions.

Indoor funerals will be allowed to have up to 20 attendees, while those taking place outside can have up to 30 attendees.

ACT chief minister Andrew Barr has advised Canberrans to avoid large crowds, keep 1.5m apart from others, continue to practice good hand hygiene and to "stay home" from work or school if they are sick.

He previously urged residents to stay at home, except for certain essential reasons.

These are:

- Shopping for what you need - food and necessary supplies
- Medical or healthcare needs, including compassionate requirements
- Exercise in compliance with the public gathering requirements
- Work and study if you can't work or learn remotely

ACT police officers would be issuing a warning in the first instance.

Guardian Australia understands that police have focused on enforcing the two-person gathering limits, not why people have left their homes.

## **Northern Territory**

The Northern Territory already commenced its three-stage plan to ease restrictions in the state in early May.

The NT currently has a 10-person gathering limit indoors and outdoors.

From Friday 8 May these were lifted for outdoor weddings and funerals. An unlimited number of people may attend as long as physical distancing can still be observed.

Since 1 May, Territorians have been allowed to use public swimming pools, go fishing with friends and play non-contact sports like golf or tennis and visit waterparks, as long as safe physical distancing can be observed.

National parks are also open for camping, swimming and hiking.

Since 15 May additional indoor activities have been permitted, as long as they take less than two hours. These include going to the gym, eating at a cafe or restaurant, visiting a museum or undergoing non-facial cosmetic procedures like manicures or tanning. Bars can reopen but alcohol can only be served with a meal.

Indoor weddings, funerals and religious activities will also be allowed.

From 5 June all businesses will be allowed to reopen as long as they have a Covid-19 plan. The two-hour limit will be lifted allowing night clubs, cinemas, tattoo parlours casinos and pokies to reopen. However physical distancing must still be observed.

All sporting activities will be allowed to restart from 5 June and spectators will be allowed to attend.

Currently, remote Indigenous communities have protections in place to stop non-essential visitors from entering, and quarantine periods for residents returning from community hubs. The protections will be assessed and potentially lifted on 18 June.

Gunner said that opening the NT border would be “dead last”.

The Northern Territory currently requires any non-essential travellers to self-quarantine in a hotel for a period of 14 days. As of 3 April, the traveller must pay for the expenses associated with this quarantine period.

## **South Australia**

South Australia has not formally lifted any physical distancing laws, but the state never imposed the strict lockdowns seen in Victoria, NSW or WA.

South Australia opted not to enforce new two-person-gathering laws, but premier Steven Marshall had still urged people to follow these rules.

Since Monday 11 May, outdoor dining at restaurants and cafes has recommenced for groups of up to 10 people. From 22 May, restaurants and cafes will be able to serve 10 patrons indoors and 10 outdoors simultaneously. Alcohol will be able to be served to diners.

Pubs will be able to serve seated patrons food and alcohol from 5 June, when the state moves to stage two. Cinemas and theatres will also be allowed to reopen under stage two.

In addition to those officiating, funerals are now able to have 20 people attend indoor ceremonies, and 30 outdoors. Non-contact sport, house auctions and open inspections have also resumed.

The state is also reopening university and Tafe tutorials, public libraries, pools, churches and community halls.

The SA government has also already welcomed students back into classrooms for term two.

On-the-spot fines of \$1,000 still will only be applied to those who are gathering in groups larger than 10.

Marshall has also announced stage two of the state’s plan to ease coronavirus restrictions. From 8 June, South Australia will see the reopening of cinemas and theatres, seated dining, gyms and

indoor fitness, galleries and museums, and beauty services. Sporting competition will also start back up, without spectators.

Future steps for consideration also include larger gatherings, reopening of nightclubs, pubs and bars, and easing state border restrictions and travel into protected communities. No date was given for when these steps could be implemented, though.

Social distancing rules must still be followed, and gatherings must abide by the one person per four square meters rules.

All people entering South Australia are required to undertake a 14-day quarantine.

*This article was amended on 15 April 2020 to correct the statement that Queensland has announced a state of emergency. It is a public health emergency.*

*Due to the unprecedented and ongoing nature of the coronavirus outbreak, this article is being regularly updated to ensure that it reflects the current situation at the date of publication. Any significant corrections made to this or previous versions of the article will continue to be footnoted in line with Guardian editorial policy.*

## **Americans have had enough ...**

... and are marching for justice in unprecedented numbers. In small towns and big cities across the country, thousands of people are giving voice to the grief and anger that generations of black Americans have suffered at the hands of the criminal justice system. Young and old, black and white, family and friends have joined together to say: enough.

The unconscionable examples of racism over the last weeks and months come as America's communities of color have been hit hardest by the coronavirus and catastrophic job losses. This is a perfect storm hitting black Americans. Meanwhile, the political leadership suggests that “when the looting starts, the shooting starts”. The president who promised to end the “American carnage” is in danger of making it worse.

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