



# ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF VICTORIA INC.

239 A'Beckett Street, Melbourne 3000

## THE RHSV's PLAN TO REOPEN

17 October 2021

*All information and dates referenced align with Victoria's Roadmap: Delivering the National Plan. This document is subject to public health consideration of epidemiology at the time and may change.*

### WE ALL HAVE A DUTY OF CARE

The single most important thing we can do to minimise the spread of COVID-19 is take personal responsibility for the health and wellbeing of ourselves and others; this means you should not attend the RHSV for any reason, if you are feeling unwell, and/or displaying [symptoms associated with COVID-19](#) – even if they are mild.

### DUTY OF CARE AS AN EMPLOYER

Everyone has the right to be safe at work. As an employer, the RHSV has a duty of care to its employees and volunteers. This means the RHSV should eliminate or, if that is not reasonably practicable, minimise the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace. This proposed approach will therefore enable the RHSV to fulfil its obligations and reassure staff and volunteers who are already vaccinated that they will not be placing their health at risk by coming into the RHSV.

Volunteers are considered as 'workers' under Victoria's OHS Act and as such should be afforded the same considerations as a paid employee. WorkSafe Victoria has information on [preparing workplaces for COVID-19](#).

The RHSV's response to the COVID19 pandemic is covered in the [RHSV COVIDSafe Plan](#). This plan outlines our actions to create a safe workplace.

Vaccine passports will be linked to the Victorian State Government QR Code Service and everyone entering the RHSV premises will be required to show proof of full vaccination.

### DUTY OF CARE AS AN EMPLOYEE

Employees and volunteers too have a duty of care for safety and health at the workplace. Their 'duty of care' means that they must:

- work safely to ensure their own safety and health;
- make sure their actions do not cause injury or harm to others.

In September 2021 all RHSV staff were surveyed about vaccination and 100% of staff are now fully vaccinated for COVID and 100% of staff agree that all those attending the RHSV should be fully vaccinated for COVID.

### DISCRIMINATION

All providers of good and services have a legal responsibility to ensure that their customers and clients are treated fairly and with respect.

During the pandemic the RHSV has revised our conditions of entry to accommodate public health directives and our duty of care to our employees and volunteers, such as the conditions of entry to the RHSV premises to wear a face mask and to be fully vaccinated.

The Equal Opportunity Act prohibits discrimination in certain areas of life, including employment and the provision of goods and services, based on protected attributes such as disability or religious belief or activity. Wearing a mask or vaccination status is **not** a protected attribute under the Equal Opportunity Act. This means that discrimination law doesn't offer protection for everyone who *chooses* not to get vaccinated, only for people who have one of the other protected attributes in the Equal Opportunity Act.

The current state and territory public health orders provide that if you have a medical condition or a disability that requires you to keep your face uncovered, this is a lawful exemption to having to wear a face mask. Ditto vaccination.

So, whilst wearing a mask and/or vaccination status are **not** protected attributes under the Equal Opportunity Act, disability *is* a protected attribute and the only reason for obtaining a legal exemption from wearing a mask or being vaccinated is for medical or mental reasons ie a disability-related reason.

Therefore, if someone wishing to enter the RHSV says that they are exempt from wearing a mask or from vaccination, the RHSV will not require proof of their vaccination status or ask them to wear a mask as this *is* discrimination. However, the RHSV still upholds our conditions of entry which disallow non-mask-wearers or those not vaccinated from entering our premises although we will, at all times, strive to offer viable off-premises alternatives.

#### **Alternatives to attending the RHSV premises in person**

- All our council and committee meetings will continue to be offered on Zoom (they will most likely be hybrid meetings).
- The RHSV will continue to deliver only online or digital events during 2021. When we reopen in 2022, on-site events will start again in February. However, wherever possible, we will continue to offer hybrid events with delivery both on-site and through video-conferencing. There will be price parity for both delivery methods.
- Our bricks & mortar bookshop will continue to have a strong web-presence and is 100% available to those who are not vaccinated but wish to buy books. Book collection can be via Australia Post or click-and-collect to preserve price parity.
- Our collections staff will continue to assist research for those with a disability who are prevented from entering the RHSV premises under our current conditions of entry.

#### **Training staff and volunteers**

All RHSV staff and volunteers will be receiving training in avoiding discriminatory and judgemental behaviour. We are anxious that our staff and volunteers will not have to deal with angry or confused people so we will be spending time on making sure that the nuances of discrimination are understood by everyone at the RHSV. We want to stress that we have a respectful workplace and we won't tolerate anger and abusive language.

## **TIME LINE**

### **National Plan B**

*70% of 16+ fully vaccinated*

**Confirmed date: Friday 22nd October 2021**

New conditions of entry to the RHSV premises:

- we are open only to fully-vaccinated for COVID people. This applies to *everyone*: all staff, volunteers, members, contractors and members of the public.
- wearing face masks indoors is mandatory
- that all people check-in with the Victorian Government QR Code Service

In addition

- From this date fully vaccinated staff work from RHSV premises. They will no longer work from home.
- The RHSV bookshop and exhibition gallery will be open to members or the public however, the library is not open to researchers until National Plan C comes into operation.
- Permits for authorised staff to attend the RHSV will no longer be required.



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- Staff who are partially vaccinated or unvaccinated for COVID can continue to work from home until fully vaccinated for COVID.
- Staff who have an authorised medical exemption can continue to work from home.
- The RHSV will continue to offer COVID vaccination leave for staff.

*From Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> of October, in metropolitan Melbourne, there will be no restrictions on people leaving their home or a curfew, and no travel limit within metropolitan Melbourne. People in the city still won't be able to visit regional Victoria, however. In metropolitan Melbourne, ten visitors, including dependents, will be able to visit a home each day. Outdoor gatherings will increase to 15 people. Up to 20 fully vaccinated people will be allowed inside at hospitality venues with 50 outside, subject to density limits.*

*In regional Victoria, hospitality and entertainment venues can open indoors to 30 fully vaccinated people.*

### National Plan C

*80% of 16+ fully vaccinated*

*Indicative date: 5<sup>th</sup> November 2021 (but probably earlier)*

The RHSV is fully reactivated.

Conditions of entry to the RHSV premises continue to include:

- we are open only to fully-vaccinated for COVID people. This applies to *everyone*: all staff, volunteers, members, contractors and members of the public.
- wearing face masks indoors is mandatory
- that all people check-in with the Victorian Government QR Code Service

In addition

- All staff are expected to be fully vaccinated and able to return to work at the RHSV.
- Volunteers who are fully vaccinated for COVID can return to work at the RHSV.
- Staff and volunteers who remain unvaccinated for COVID by choice may not be able to have special arrangements made for them, which may lead to them compromising their ability to fulfil their respective obligations for work.

### National Plan D

*80% of 12+ fully vaccinated*

*Indicative date: 19 November 2021*

Conditions of entry to the RHSV premises continue to include:

- we are open only to fully-vaccinated for COVID people. This applies to *everyone*: all staff, volunteers, members, contractors and members of the public.
- wearing face masks indoors is mandatory
- that all people check-in with the Victorian Government QR Code Service

### Until 31 January 2022

These measures will remain in place until 31 January 2022, or until further information is made available from the government about COVID controls for the unvaccinated members of our community.

## **Beyond 31 January 2022**

This plan will be revised based on advice received from the Victorian Government and we will communicate further details regarding RHSV access then.

## **References**

### **[Victorian Equal Rights and Human Rights Commission](#)**

<https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/resources/retailers-guide-face-masks-and-discrimination/>

<https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/resources/faqs-face-masks-and-human-rights/>

### **[Worksafe Victoria](#)**

### **[Australian Government Fair Work Ombudsman](#)**

### **[Australian Human Rights Commission](#)**

### **[Australian Government re refusing service](#)**

### **[Victorian Government Roadmap](#)**

### **[Volunteering Australia](#)**