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# Re-opening the International Border – Advice to Industry – 15 December 2021

## The Australian Government is easing restrictions for fully vaccinated travellers to Australia

### From 15 December 2021 new arrangements apply

From 0001 AEDT on 15 December 2021, 'fully vaccinated' eligible visa holders will be allowed to travel to Australia without requiring an individual travel exemption. These new arrangements are in addition to the exemptions which came effect on 1 November 2021 – as per the 'Post 1 November 2021 arrangements' detailed below.

All travellers to Australia must comply with the quarantine requirements in the state or territory of their arrival, and any other state or territory to which they plan to travel.

### Eligible Visa Holders

Travellers must hold a valid visa for one of the eligible visa subclasses listed on the Department of Home Affairs COVID-19 and the border website. These include skilled and student cohorts, as well as humanitarian, working holiday maker and temporary family visa holders.

Only fully vaccinated eligible visa holders are permitted to undertake exemption free travel to Australia under these arrangements.

Non-eligible visa holders travelling to Australia will still require an approved travel exemption to come to Australia, unless travelling under an International Safe Travel Zone arrangement (see Attachment A for further details on Safe Travel Zones). A travel exemption can be requested through the Department of Home Affairs' Travel Exemption Portal.

From 1600 AEDT 14 December 2021, airlines will receive an 'Ok to board' message\* through the Advanced Passenger Processing (APP) system for all eligible visa holders travelling to Australia, regardless of their country of departure.

Airlines are still required to verify the vaccination status of all travellers prior to boarding, including for eligible visa holders from 15 December 2021. Any eligible visa holder who cannot present evidence that demonstrates they are fully vaccinated should be carried within caps.

\*'Ok to board' messaging will also apply in instances of Safe Travel Zone arrangements, which is covered in Attachment A to this Industry Advice.

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## Post 1 November 2021 arrangements

Subject to the requirements of the relevant state or territory of arrival, 'fully vaccinated' Australian citizens, permanent residents and their immediate family members can arrive without being included in international passenger caps.

'Fully vaccinated' Australian citizens and permanent residents can depart Australia without requiring an outwards travel exemption.

These provisions also apply to Australian citizens and permanent residents who:

- are under the age of 12 at the time of departure (whether vaccinated or not), or
- cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons (with approved evidence and subject to state and territory requirements).

Also, from 1 November 2021, the definition of 'immediate family member' includes the parents of adult Australian citizens and permanent residents. This is for the purpose of assessing exemptions to Australia's travel restrictions only. This includes:

- biological parents
- legal (including adoptive) parents
- step-parents
- parents in-law.

Before a parent or an immediate family member who is not an Australian citizen or permanent resident can travel to Australia, they will need to have their relationship confirmed by submitting a travel exemption request through the Department of Home Affairs' [Travel Exemption Portal](#). Airlines are not required to confirm the family relationship. Airlines confirm a passenger's travel exemption status by contacting the Australian Border Operations Centre.

Passengers may be treated as 'fully vaccinated' if they meet the criteria outlined in this document.

## Passenger Caps and Quarantine

All inbound travellers who do not meet the criteria or exemptions set out in this advice will be included in airline passenger caps. They will also be subject to Australia's travel restrictions as well as state or territory quarantine requirements of the jurisdiction they arrive in. Passengers required to enter managed quarantine on arrival in Australia must be carried within passenger caps.

Whilst some jurisdictions may allow quarantine free travel for eligible travellers, others jurisdictions may impose modified quarantine arrangements, including for fully vaccinated international arrivals. For example, international arrivals to Queensland are required to complete a [Queensland International Arrivals Registration \(QIAR\)](#). Passengers must present their QIAR evidence, prior to boarding, showing they have been approved for home quarantine in order to be carried above caps.

International passengers arriving in Australia are not automatically permitted to transit to another state or territory. [Domestic travel restrictions may apply](#).

## Australia Travel Declaration

From 1 November 2021, all travellers to Australia should complete an [Australia Travel Declaration \(ATD\)](#) at least 72 hours before departure. The ATD contains a declaration regarding the traveller's vaccination status and their 14 day travel history that is considered to be critical health information. Travellers must be able to provide evidence that they made this declaration before boarding the aircraft. This is an enforceable requirement under the Biosecurity (Entry Requirements—Human Coronavirus with Pandemic Potential) Determination 2021. A person who fails to comply with the requirements under the determination may be liable to a civil penalty (fine) of 30 penalty units (currently \$6,660 AUD). Further, travellers who do not make the declaration prior to boarding will be subject to delays when arriving in Australia.

If a passenger presents without having completed the ATD they should be encouraged to do so before uplift and advised that it is an enforceable requirement that they can produce evidence that they have completed

the relevant declaration before boarding the aircraft. If a passenger is unable to complete the ATD the airline should request the passenger completes a manual (paper) declaration prior to boarding. Passengers should retain the completed manual declaration and provide to a relevant authority on arrival.

## Evidence of a negative COVID-19 PCR test for inbound passengers

Evidence of a negative COVID-19 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test taken within 3 days prior to scheduled departure is required for inbound travel to Australia (the first flight if there are one or more connecting flights booked for travel to Australia), unless an [exemption](#) applies.

- If the flight is delayed, the passenger meets the pre-departure testing requirements. They do not need a new test.
- If the flight has been re-scheduled or cancelled, the passenger will need to provide evidence of a negative COVID-19 PCR test result taken within 3 days of the re-scheduled or newly booked flight.
- From 1 November 2021, exemption from the PCR testing requirement for people who are on incoming international flights from safe travel zone countries has been removed.
- More information about updated pre-departure PCR test requirements, including: the evidence required for medical exemptions; and what to do when travellers present a positive result but have recovered from COVID-19, is available on the [Department of Health website](#).

At this stage Australia does not impose a requirement for a pre-departure COVID-19 test for outbound international travel. Destination countries may have testing requirements which require compliance for entry.

## Verifying vaccination status

Passengers **vaccinated in Australia** must prove their vaccination history by presenting to airlines an Australian Government-issued International COVID-19 Vaccination Certificate (ICVC) at the time of airport check-in. Passengers can request their ICVC through an Australian Medicare online account in myGov, or the Express Plus Medicare app. Passengers without access to these online options can visit a Services Australia services centre or contact the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) on 1800 653 809.

The ICVC contains a secure Quick Response (QR) code based on ePassport technology. Airlines will need to authenticate the QR code digitally through a simple process of scanning the QR code with the Australian Government's official VDS-NC Checker app<sup>1</sup>. Alternatively, industry-led solutions, such as the IATA Travel Pass (from mid-November 2021), can also authenticate an ICVC if they have been updated to incorporate this functionality.

Passengers **vaccinated overseas** travelling to Australia may or may not have access to an Australian Government-issued ICVC. If not, they will need to present a foreign-issued vaccination certificate instead. Airlines will need to inspect the certificate to confirm that they are in an acceptable format and show that the passenger is fully vaccinated (see below). Passengers travelling to Australia who present a foreign vaccination certificate will also have to make a legally binding attestation (preferably in their Australia Travel Declaration (ATD)) that their certificate is true and that they are fully vaccinated.

## What 'fully vaccinated' means

Australia considers you to be fully vaccinated if you have completed a course, including a mixed dose, of a Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) approved or recognised vaccine. Current vaccines and dosages accepted for the purposes of travel are:

- Two doses at least 14 days apart of:
  - AstraZeneca Vaxzevria
  - AstraZeneca Covishield
  - Pfizer/Biontech Comirnaty
  - Moderna Spikevax or Takeda
  - Sinovac Coronavac

<sup>1</sup> The Visible Digital Seal for Non-Constrained Environments (VDS-NC) Checker app by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is available from the Apple and Google Play stores.

- Bharat Covaxin
- Sinopharm BBIBP-CorV (for 18–60 year olds)
- Or one dose of:
  - Johnson & Johnson/Janssen-Cilag COVID Vaccine.

Seven days must have passed since the final dose of vaccine in a course of immunisation for you to be considered fully vaccinated. Mixed doses count towards being fully vaccinated as long as all vaccines are approved or recognised by the TGA.

The TGA is evaluating other COVID-19 vaccines that may be recognised for the purposes of travel in future. Information on approved and recognised vaccines is available on the TGA website at [www.tga.gov.au](http://www.tga.gov.au).

### **Unable to be vaccinated**

Australian citizens or residents under 12 years of age will be treated as though they were fully vaccinated for the purposes of travel arrangements. Their age will be demonstrated by their passport.

Australian citizens and permanent residents departing Australia who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons should present their Australian COVID-19 digital certificate or immunisation history statement to prove their contraindication (these may indicate a 'valid to' date).

Australian citizens or permanent residents travelling to Australia who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons should check the quarantine requirements in the state or territory to which they are travelling. From 1 November 2021, Australian citizens or permanent residents travelling to Australia who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons will be allowed to travel above passenger caps in to New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory, but travellers should be aware that they are unlikely to be able to travel onward to other jurisdictions

For travellers who provide a medical certificate that indicates they are unable to be vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine because of a medical condition, the medical certificate must include the following information:

- their name (this must match their travel identification documents)
- date of medical consultation and details of their medical practitioner
- details that clearly acknowledge that they have a medical condition which means they cannot receive a COVID-19 vaccination (vaccination is contraindicated). People who have received non-TGA approved or recognised vaccines should not be certified in this category and cannot be treated as vaccinated for the purposes of their travel.

### **Unvaccinated and partially vaccinated Australian children aged 12-17**

From 1 November, unvaccinated or partially vaccinated Australian children aged 12-17 years old entering Australia through New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory will be exempt from passenger caps and eligible for reduced quarantine requirements.

Where a child is travelling with parent/guardians who are all fully vaccinated, the entire family will be able to travel outside of passenger caps. If the child is travelling with unvaccinated adult family members, then the entire family group will be subject to managed quarantine and passenger caps.

### **When is a child considered unvaccinated or partially vaccinated?**

Australian children who arrive into Australia will be considered as unvaccinated if they are:

- aged 12-17 years inclusive and have not received any COVID-19 vaccination
- aged 12-17 years inclusive and have only been partially vaccinated with a recognised COVID-19 vaccine
- aged 12-17 years inclusive and have been partially or fully vaccinated with a non-recognised COVID-19 vaccine.

### **Vaccinated offshore - acceptable foreign vaccination certificate formats**

Many foreign certificates come in digital formats that can easily be verified using government or industry apps. Many airlines are already familiar with these apps from using them to verify PCR test results. And

many airlines have trialled, or are implementing, apps that can read multiple types of certificate, such as the IATA TravelPass. Airlines are strongly encouraged to use these apps, where available, to verify that foreign vaccination certificates are authentic.

A foreign certificate – paper or digital – is acceptable as long as:

- it was issued by a national or state/provincial-level authority or an accredited vaccination provider (for example a pharmacy, doctor or nurse)
- it is in English, or accompanied by a certified translation
- it shows:
  - o the passenger's name as it appears in the passport
  - o either the passenger's date of birth or passport number
  - o the vaccine brand name; and
  - o either the date of each dose or the date on which the passenger completed a full course of immunisation.

If the certificate is not in English, it must be accompanied by a certified translation that includes the stamp or membership number of a professional translation association. The entire certificate must be translated, not just part of it.

If the foreign vaccination certificate is in a name that is different to what is in the passport, the passenger will need to provide evidence of their name, such as a marriage certificate or driver's licence.

Airlines should presume that a foreign vaccination certificate is acceptable unless there is a clear reason for doubt.

## **Verifying outbound Australians vaccinated in Australia**

To leave Australia without a travel exemption, Australian citizens and permanent residents vaccinated in Australia must prove their vaccination status through Australia's International COVID-19 Vaccination Certificate (ICVC). Alternatives such as the domestic certificate are not accepted.

Where possible airlines should authenticate the passenger's ICVC with the free DFAT VDS-NC Checker app or industry equivalent at or before airport check-in on departure. For each passenger an airline agent should ensure:

- the passenger presents their passport and ICVC QR code, either digitally or in paper form
  - o if the passenger does not hold an ICVC, they must obtain one per the advice on the [Services Australia website](#) – this should only take minutes.
- the QR code is scanned using the free DFAT VDS-NC Checker app or an industry equivalent app to confirm it is authentic; and
- the vaccination information in the ICVC equates to 'fully vaccinated' and that name and date of birth or passport number align with the passport presented by the passenger.

Anyone fully or partly vaccinated in Australia is eligible for an ICVC. Some ICVC holders will therefore not be fully vaccinated. Airline agents need to verify that the vaccination history within the ICVC confirms the holder as 'fully vaccinated'.

## **Verifying outbound Australians vaccinated offshore**

Australians who were vaccinated overseas may, on departing Australia, present foreign vaccination certificates rather than ICVCs. The criteria for fully vaccinated remain the same.

- The airline agent must verify the passenger's foreign vaccination certificate at or before airport check-in on departure.

## Verifying returning Australians vaccinated in Australia

For returning Australians who have been vaccinated in Australia, the airline agent must ensure the same criteria for outbound travel are met, and that for each passenger:

- an ATD has been completed
  - where evidence of a completed ATD cannot be produced at check-in the airline should request the passenger completes an ATD at that time
  - where an ATD cannot be completed, the airline should request the passenger completes a manual (paper) declaration
  - where a manual declaration is undertaken, the airline should advise the passenger to retain their declaration for handing to the relevant authority on arrival in Australia; and
- the passenger provides evidence of a negative COVID-19 PCR test taken within 3 days of scheduled departure or an exemption consistent with advice from the [Department of Health website](#).

***Please note that passengers who have completed an ATD do not need to provide a manual declaration.***

## Verifying Australians vaccinated offshore travelling or returning to Australia

Australian citizens, permanent residents and their immediate families vaccinated offshore will generally not have an ICVC and must instead provide the airline with a foreign vaccination certificate. An airline agent at or before airport check-in on departure will need to ensure for each passenger:

- that an ATD has been completed.
  - Evidence of a completed ATD is demonstrated by either;
    - the official email a passenger receives on completion of their ATD, which the passenger can present in either digital or printed hardcopy form; or
    - the outcome statement from the passengers ATD submission, which the passenger can present in either digital or printed hardcopy form.
  - Where evidence of a completed ATD cannot be produced at check-in the airline should request the passenger completes and ATD at that time.
  - Where an ATD cannot be completed, the airline should request the passenger completes a manual (paper) declaration.
  - Where a manual declaration is undertaken, the airline should advise the passenger to retain their declaration for handing to the relevant authority on arrival in Australia.
- the passenger presents their foreign vaccination certificate.
- the foreign vaccination certificate is an acceptable format and meets the definition of ‘fully vaccinated’; and
- the passenger provides evidence of a negative COVID-19 PCR test taken within 3 days of scheduled departure. Otherwise uplift should be denied, unless an [exemption](#) applies.

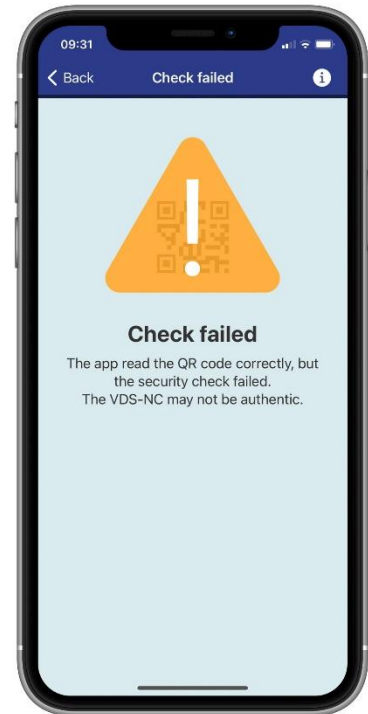
***Please note that passengers who have completed an ATD do not need to also provide a manual declaration.***

## ICVC authentication

If the VDS-NC Checker app reports that an ICVC QR code is 'Not a VDS-NC', or if the "Check failed" screen appears then the airline **must not** accept the ICVC. The passenger will not count as 'fully vaccinated'. The same applies if an industry app provides a similar message.

The QR code on an ICVC is larger than most, and can easily be read by recent model smartphones and devices. If a device is having trouble reading a printed QR code because of poor print quality or physical wear and tear on the QR code, airlines staff can try flattening the paper, adjusting the lighting or using the app's zoom function may assist.

If the paper QR code is unreadable, the traveller should be advised to print the certificate again, get a new one by contacting the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) on 1800 653 809, or show the QR code from a mobile device. Reading an ICVC QR code from a mobile device produces the best results.



## No separation of vaccinated and unvaccinated travellers at airports or on aircraft

From 1 November 2021, there will be no Australian Government requirement to separate vaccinated and unvaccinated travellers at airports or on aircraft. Specific processing arrangements at each airport will be a matter for each airport operator, working with border agencies as required, to meet respective state or territory Government health requirements (which may include separation).

## Facilitation of airline crew

Quarantine arrangements for airline crew are subject to respective state or territory requirements. Airlines need to check with respective Australian states and territories.

## Fully vaccinated temporary visa holders with a travel exemption

Fully vaccinated foreign nationals with an approved visa and travel exemption, and who are not required to quarantine on arrival, are allowed to fly to Australia above the international passenger arrival caps if they are flying into New South Wales, Victoria or the Australian Capital Territory from 1 November 2021

## More information and support

The VDS-NC Checker app is available from the Apple and Google Play stores.

For more information on passengers obtaining an ICVC, go to [servicesaustralia.gov.au/covidvaccineproof](https://servicesaustralia.gov.au/covidvaccineproof).

Technical information on the security of the ICVC and eligibility to obtain one is available from [passports.gov.au](https://passports.gov.au).

For privacy reasons, the Government has no service that airlines can contact to confirm whether a particular Australian certificate is genuine or has the correct details.

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) provides information on vaccines [health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines](https://health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines).

## Glossary

<p>Immediate family member</p>	<p>An immediate family member is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a spouse</li> <li>- a de facto partner</li> <li>- a dependent child</li> <li>- a legal guardian</li> <li>- a parent.</li> </ul>
<p>Parent</p>	<p>From 1 November 2021, the definition of 'immediate family member' will include the parents of adult Australian citizens and permanent residents. This is for the purpose of assessing exemptions to Australia's travel restrictions only. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- biological parents</li> <li>- legal (including adoptive) parents</li> <li>- step-parents</li> <li>- parents in-law.</li> </ul> <p>Before a parent can travel to Australia, they will need to have their relationship with their adult Australian child confirmed by submitting a travel exemption request through the Department of Home Affairs Travel Exemption Portal.</p> <p>Airlines can confirm a traveller's travel exemption status by contacting the Australian Border Operations Centre.</p>
<p>Australian Citizen</p>	<p>A person could be an Australian citizen by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- birth, OR</li> <li>- descent, OR</li> <li>- acquisition (naturalisation), OR</li> <li>- adoption.</li> </ul> <p><a href="https://guides.dss.gov.au/guide-social-security-law">guides.dss.gov.au/guide-social-security-law</a></p>
<p>Australian Permanent Resident</p>	<p>A person who is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the holder of a permanent resident visa</li> </ul>



## **Attachments**

A. Advice to Industry – Safe Travel Zones

