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Re-opening the International Border – Advice to Industry 22 October 2021

The Australian Government is reducing restrictions on airlines carrying vaccinated Australians

From 1 November 2021 new arrangements apply

From 00:01 AEST on 1 November 2021, 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 in Australia without being included in the caps which limit the number of passengers airlines can bring.

From 00:01 AEST on 1 November 2021, 'fully vaccinated' Australian citizens, permanent residents and their immediate family members 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).

Also, 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:

- 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 can confirm a traveller's travel exemption status by contacting the Border Operations Centre.

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

All inbound passengers who do not meet these criteria 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 where they arrive into Australia.

Outbound Australian citizens, permanent residents and their immediate family members who do not meet these criteria are required to apply for an outwards travel exemption to leave Australia.

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Australia Travel Declaration

From 1 November 2021, passengers will be required to provide certain health information under Australian law and those seeking to travel under quarantine free arrangements must provide a legally binding attestation regarding their vaccination status. This should be provided using the Australia Travel Declaration (ATD).

Passengers should be encouraged to complete the ATD where ever possible and airlines are asked to check that an ATD has been completed prior to uplift. If a passenger is unable to complete the ATD then a manual (paper) declaration will be required to be completed and signed by the passenger prior to travel. Passengers should retain the completed manual declaration and provide to the relevant authority on arrival.

The manual declaration template will be made available to airlines for provision to passengers at check in.

Travel will not be restricted to or from specific countries

The Australian Government is not restricting which countries a traveller can travel to or from. The Australian Government will continue to advise travellers of country specific risks through Smartraveller at smartraveller.gov.au. Each traveller will need to be aware of country the specific entry requirements for the country they are travelling to.

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

Evidence of a negative COVID-19 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test taken within 72 hours 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).

- 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 72 hours of the re-scheduled or newly booked flight.

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 app¹. 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** 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 who present a foreign vaccination certificate will also have to make a legally binding attestation (preferably in their Australian Travel Declaration (ATD)) that their certificate is true and that they are fully vaccinated.

¹ 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.

What ‘fully vaccinated’ means

A passenger is ‘fully vaccinated’ if they have completed a course of an approved or recognised vaccine according to the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). Current approved and recognised vaccines and courses are:

- two doses at least 14 days apart of:
 - AstraZeneca Vaxzevria
 - AstraZeneca Covishield
 - Pfizer/Biontech Comirnaty
 - Moderna Spikevax
 - Sinovac Coronavac
- or one dose of:
 - Janssen-Cilag COVID Vaccine.

Seven days must have passed since the final dose of vaccine in a course of immunisation prior to scheduled departure. Mixed doses do not count towards being ‘fully vaccinated for the purposes of leaving and entering Australia.

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.

In the case of passengers under 12 years of age, or who are unable to be vaccinated on medical grounds, the airline agent will need to ensure the following criteria are met:

- confirmation that the passenger is less than 12 years of age at the time of departure; or
- if a passenger is medically unable to be vaccinated, the passenger will need to provide evidence of a medical exemption.
 - Passengers vaccinated outside of Australia: there is no specified format for this – airlines will need to use common sense in interpreting and accepting documentation from a registered medical practitioner. States and Territories may not accept medical exemptions.
 - Passengers vaccinated in Australia: individuals who have a medical contraindication reported for COVID-19 vaccines can use their Immunisation History Statement as vaccination evidence. The Immunisation History Statement displays all vaccinations, or medical contraindications that have been reported to the Australian Immunisation Register.

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:
 - the passenger’s name as it appears in the passport
 - either the passenger’s date of birth or passport number
 - the vaccine brand name; and

- 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. If a certificate is assessed as not acceptable then the passenger would need to be uplifted within caps and may require a travel exemption if they are not an Australian citizen or permanent resident,

Verifying outbound Australians vaccinated in Australia

The airline agent must² verify the passenger's ICVC at or before airport check-in on departure. An airline agent will need to ensure that for each passenger:

- the passenger presents their passport and ICVC QR code, either digitally or in paper form,
- 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 encourage the passenger to complete a manual 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 72 hours of scheduled departure.

Verifying Australians vaccinated offshore seeking to return home

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

² Guidance to follow on any exceptions to this requirement.

- where evidence of a completed ATD cannot be produced at check-in the airline should encourage the passenger to complete a manual 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 72 hours of scheduled departure.

ICVC authentication

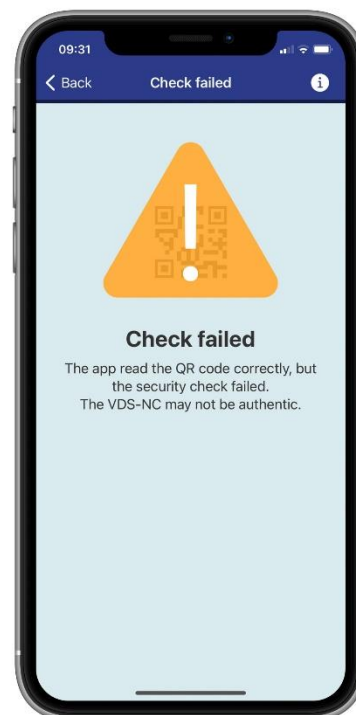
If the VDS-NC Checker app reports that an ICVC QR code is ‘Not a VDS-NC’, or if the “Check failed” screen appears then the airline **must not** accept the ICVC. The passenger will not count as ‘fully vaccinated’. The same applies if an industry app provides a similar message.

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.

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.

Technical information on the security of the ICVC and eligibility to obtain one is available from 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.

Glossary

Immediate family member	<p>An immediate family member is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a spouse - a de facto partner - a dependent child - a legal guardian - a parent.
Parent	<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"> - biological parents - legal (including adoptive) parents - step-parents - parents in-law. <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 Border Operations Centre.</p>
Australian Citizen	<p>A person could be an Australian citizen by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - birth, OR - descent, OR - acquisition (naturalisation), OR - adoption. <p>guides.dss.gov.au/guide-social-security-law</p>
Australian Permanent Resident	<p>A person who is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the holder of a permanent resident visa