MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday, 23 December 2021

NSW UPDATES COVID SETTINGS AND MAKES RAPID ANTIGEN TESTS FREE

The NSW Government is taking precautionary steps to maintain its safe and measured approach as we continue to learn to live with COVID.

The following adjustments to the NSW Government's pandemic settings will come into effect:

From 12.01am Friday, 24 December:

- Masks will be compulsory in all indoor non-residential settings, including for hospitality staff and in offices, unless eating or drinking.

From 12.01am Monday, 27 December 2021:

- QR code check-ins will be compulsory, including for hospitality and retail; and

- Hospitality venues, including pubs, clubs, restaurants and cafes will move to 1 person per 2 sqm rule indoors, with no density limit for outdoor settings.

All settings will remain in place until Wednesday, 27 January 2022.

Extending QR check-in requirements will remind people that if they receive a notification they should be tested if they feel unwell. They should also get tested if they are directed by NSW Health or if they have symptoms.

Further to these measures, the Government is asking people to reduce mingling where they can including when eating and drinking, work from home where possible and hold events outside.

The NSW Government will continue to monitor these settings.

The NSW Government will also procure Rapid-Antigen Test kits and make them available for free to people across the State, to give additional options to people and allow those who need to get a PCR test to do so.

Premier Dominic Perrottet said these measures would help take the pressure off our health system and keep the community safe until more people could get their booster shots.

"We said we would tailor our settings as the situation evolved and these steps will help take the pressure of our health system, so the people who need care can access it," Mr Perrottet said.

"Our frontline health workers have done an enormous job keeping us safe over the past two years and we can't thank them enough.

"Vaccination remains the key to keeping people safe and out of hospital. It is vital people continue to roll up their sleeves to get vaccinated and receive their boosters."

Health Minister Brad Hazzard thanked people for continuing to come forward in large numbers to get tested and urged everyone to follow the restrictions.

"We thank people for coming out in large numbers to get tested but we need to make sure that tests are available for people who really need it," Mr Hazzard said.

"If you don't have any symptoms, please don't get a test just for the sake of it. The best thing people can do is follow the rules outlined today. The health and safety of the community continues to be the highest priority.

"I want to again thank NSW Health for the work they are doing in response to the pandemic."