

Barton Deakin Brief: NSW New COVID-19 Restrictions 23 March 2020

In order to slow the spread of COVID-19 in NSW, the Berejiklian Government has placed restrictions on non-essential gatherings and commercial activity.

This follows stimulus packages from both the NSW State and Federal Governments with requirements on NSW citizens to abide by social distancing. As of March 23, 2020, there are over 600 cases of COVID-19 in NSW and 1,550 nationally. Across Australia, 7 individuals have died of the virus and 88 individuals have recovered.

Facility closures

Consistent with the decisions of the National Cabinet and announced by the Federal Government on Sunday 22 March, 2020, access to the following 'non-essential' facilities has been restricted from midday on Monday 23 March, 2020:

- Pubs, registered and licenced clubs (excluding bottle shops attached to these venues), hotels (excluding accommodation)
- Gyms and indoor sporting venues
- Cinemas, entertainment venues, casinos, night clubs, amusement, recreation and entertainment facilities
- Restaurants and cafes will be restricted to takeaway and/or home delivery
- Religious gatherings, places of worship or funerals (in enclosed spaces and other than very small groups and where the 1 person per 4 square metre rule applies)

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Isolated remote community hubs are not included in these restrictions. These measures also apply to outdoor spaces associated with the above venues.

Social gatherings

Corresponding with the Order under Section 7 of the Public Health Act 2010 made on 21 March, 2020, the following regulations on social gatherings have been made in NSW:

- a ban on non-essential indoor gatherings of 100 or more people (incl. staff)
- a ban on outdoor gatherings of 500 or more people to continue in place
- people only consider travel when it is essential
- strict visitation rules for aged care facilities including a limit of two visitors a day and, preferably, no children under 16 years of age
- social distancing measures of 1.5 metres
- lifting work restrictions on 20,000 student nurses so they can be engaged to help respond to the pandemic

Closures and prohibited venues are set to be in place for at least four weeks, starting from midday on the 23rd of March 2020.

Schools

NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian announced early on Monday the 23rd of March that NSW public schools will remain open, while encouraging NSW parents to keep their school aged children at home from Tuesday 24 March, 2020.

This encouragement reflects the Government's commitment to teach children at home or at school the same material or unit of work.

"The health advice has not changed," Ms Berejiklian said on Monday morning. "However, for practical reasons in NSW we will be encouraging parents to keep their children at home."

"Already last week we had up to 30 per cent of parents who chose to keep their [children] at home, and we appreciate and anticipate that number will increase."

The NSW Minister for Education, the Hon Sarah Mitchell MLC, has said public schools will provide virtual classrooms for those who decide to stay at home.

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For more information, please contact [Anthony Benschel](#) on +61 438 439 431, [Nicholas Rigby](#) or [Terry Duggan](#) on +61 2 9191 7888.

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