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# Vaccinated Aussies could be allowed to head overseas

**Andrew Tillett** *Political correspondent*



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Vaccinated Australians could be allowed to undertake quarantine-free overseas travel within months, with health officials told to develop medical thresholds for easing international border controls once vulnerable people are protected.

Following Friday's national cabinet meeting, premiers also agreed to lift capacity at large, ticketed, seated events such as sporting matches to 100 per cent as well as strive to keep state borders open when coronavirus outbreaks flare up.





Prime Minister Scott Morrison says national cabinet is looking at how to reopen Australia. **Alex Ellinghausen**

As the government tries to push ahead with reopening the economy despite [the setback to the vaccine rollout](#), the tourism and education sectors warned they would suffer further damage if the international borders remained closed for long.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said he did not expect the delay to the rollout would have a “terribly material” impact on next month’s budget, with unemployment tracking well below the government’s forecasts.

He said national cabinet had agreed to a series of principles to guide the reopening of Australia and managing future outbreaks, with a fresh focus on economic wellbeing as well as health.

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The principles include prioritising the vaccine rollout, further improving quarantine management and implementing localised containment measures to deal with outbreaks to [avoid border closures](#).

They also agreed to the Australian Health Principals Protection Committee’s (AHPPC) recommendation that venue density limits be no stricter than one person per two square metres, and large events can have 100 per cent of seats occupied.

AHPPC’s advice was based on keeping the international border substantially closed

and vaccinating border and quarantine staff, health workers and close contacts to minimise the risk of the virus leaking out.

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The PM also said AHPPC would work in coming months to provide advice for overseas travel for Australians who had been vaccinated, as well as travel from low-risk countries, once those workers and elderly and immuno-compromised Australians had been vaccinated.

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Mr Morrison said the advice would include whether Australians who had been vaccinated would be allowed to quarantine at home or not quarantine at all upon their return, the conditions for allowing Australians immunised overseas with a vaccine also approved in Australia to return home, and travel arrangements with low-risk countries with similar vaccine arrangements.

The news could be a lifeline for about 36,000 Australians stranded overseas who have been unable to return home because of the caps on international arrivals.

Mr Morrison said quarantine-free travel may be limited just to those able to currently apply for an exemption such as on business or compassionate grounds but he did not rule out holidays.

“No one is saying that any of those things are coming in today but what we are working and planning for ... is what are the marks we have to meet to enable us to start opening up Australia more than we are now?” Mr Morrison said.

“The more Australians who are vaccinated, the more likelihood there is of being

able to have the types of arrangements that I mentioned. If the vaccination population is lower, then that of course limits to options of borders.“

However, Mr Morrison said the ability of Australians who had received a Chinese made vaccine to come back would depend on the ability of the Therapeutic Goods Administration to source data.

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Chief Medical Officer Paul Kelly said the committee would look at how well vaccines stopped transmission of the virus, how they worked against variants and how long they were effective for.

Tourism and Transport Forum chief executive Margy Osmond urged the government to reconsider reintroducing the JobKeeper wage subsidy scheme for internationally-focused operators if the vaccine delay meant the border closure was extended.

“We’re going to need additional support if the government wants to have a tourism industry this time next year,” she said.

International Education Association of Australia chief Phil Honeywood said prolonging the international border closure “has the potential to compromise us for a third academic year”.

Business Council chief Jennifer Westacott said the vaccine setback made it even more urgent for national cabinet to develop a plan to aggressively lift restrictions as vulnerable people were protected and build on the momentum of our recovery.

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