

# As Australia hits record COVID infections, Victorian Labor government spearheads homicidal policies against children

Oscar Grenfell  
15 October 2021

The Australian ruling elite and all of its political representatives are responding to the country's greatest surge of the coronavirus yet, with a frenzied campaign to lift all restrictions and force the population to "live with" the virus. Virtually every day, reports of thousands of infections and growing numbers of deaths are accompanied by announcements winding back the inadequate safety measures currently in place.

The Victorian Labor government is leading the charge, demonstrating the entirely bipartisan character of the official "herd immunity" campaign.

Its "roadmap" to "reopen the economy," in line with a national plan for the imminent lifting of all restrictions, not only threatens to completely overwhelm the state's chronically-underfunded hospital system. Labor is also establishing precedents that will be picked up by Australian jurisdictions, which can only be described as a deliberate attempt to infect tens of thousands of school children with a potentially lethal disease.

On Thursday, Victoria registered 2,297 infections, exceeding the previous daily case high in any Australian state by 330. Eleven fatalities in the state were also reported.

In August last year, the state Labor government of Premier Daniel Andrews responded to then daily record infections of 725 by belatedly instituting a sharp "stage four" lockdown, including a retail shutdown, workplace closures and protracted online learning. In the first six months of this year, the government introduced limited snap lockdowns in response to case numbers in the several dozen.

Now, the opposite is the case. Thursday's infection tally was downplayed by Andrews, who insisted that the primary issue was that the state continue to increase vaccination rates so that the current limited lockdown could be ended as scheduled, sometime next week.

"We are going to deliver the roadmap," Andrews declared, adding that "additional steps," i.e., an even faster lifting of restrictions, could be possible based on inoculation levels. Andrews spoke of "a very important agreement with the Victorian community. You get vaccinated and we will open up, and I do what I say." Infection numbers would become "less

relevant," as the reopening, "literally days away" proceeded.

The Labor premier's comments were indistinguishable from similar, callous statements made by the federal Liberal-National Coalition government and its state administration in New South Wales.

All of them are invoking inoculation levels to end all other public health measures. The Australian targets, of 70 percent adult vaccination for lifting lockdowns and 80 percent for the removal of most remaining restrictions, are similar to those used to justify "reopenings" abroad, which have led to a massive surge of the virus.

As in NSW, Andrews' agreement is not with the "Victorian people," but a pact with the largest banks and corporations against the population. In order to ensure the resumption of full profit-making activities, all imposts on business operations must be overturned, whatever the infections and deaths.

The brutal class character of this program is summed up by Labor's drive to reopen the schools. While the government is cynically branding the mental health crisis among young people, their need for social interaction and the benefits of in-person learning, the clear motivation is to get them back in the classrooms so that their parents can be herded into workplaces.

The irrationality of the policy, from the standpoint of the needs of children and educators, is demonstrated by the fact that the school calendar is already several weeks into its final term of the year. If the government's actions were dictated by science and public health, there would be no problem in extending online learning for the less than two months remaining of the school year. This, however, would obstruct the broader drive to "reopen the economy."

Even prior to the end of the lockdown, classroom teaching has resumed. Year 12 students began returning to the schools last week. They will be followed by Prep, year 1 and 2 students next week, and most other cohorts on a part-time basis from October 26, ahead of "return to normal" on November 5.

Already, schools are becoming centres of mass infection, as they have in every other outbreak. According to figures compiled by the Committee for Public Education, 204 Victorian schools have closed since mid-August due to COVID

infections, and 109 have been forced to shut in the past two weeks alone. This includes the period when schools were operating at minimum capacity, catering primarily to the children of essential workers. In the last week, since the return of year 12, 80 schools have been hit by cases.

On Thursday, Andrews and his Education Minister James Merlino made clear that any measures to limit infections within schools were purely for show. As the record case numbers were registered, they announced that from October 27, year 12 students who were deemed “primary close contacts” of confirmed COVID infections would still be compelled to attend school and sit their final exams.

These students will purportedly be placed in separate rooms, where they will be supervised by teachers who are required to wear unspecified “hospital grade” personal protective equipment. The suggestion that the policy is aimed at assisting students is a transparent fraud. Primary close contacts are frequently individuals whose housemates have tested positive.

That means young people, whose relatives have contracted a potentially-lethal disease, and who may themselves be infected, will be made to sit a high-pressure exam. And if they are positive, they will be placed in a position of potentially spreading the virus to their teachers and classmates.

The murderous character of the school policy was underscored by the announcement today that a 15-year-old girl had passed away after contracting COVID, the state’s youngest victim of the pandemic thus far.

Her tragic death is one of a growing number. Hospitalisations, moreover, are increasing and spiked over the past 24-hours. There are 798 admissions, up from 706 a day ago, 163 of them in intensive care units (ICU). The government has touted the fact that hospitalisations allegedly only account for five percent of infections at this stage, as a sign that the healthcare system may cope. Even if that figure is correct, however, COVID patients already account for more than a third of the state’s existing ICU capacity, with 106 of them on ventilation, indicating they are critically-ill and require constant care.

Doctors have already warned that patients are dying from other conditions, because of the strain being placed on the system. Andrews announced last year that his government would create 4,000 additional ICU beds, but he walked back that promise the same time he was unveiling the state’s reopening in September.

Modelling commissioned by the government and conducted by the Burnet Institute found a 61 percent likelihood that the current “reopening” plan would result in the hospital system being overwhelmed, with an accompanying 2,000 deaths by the end of the year. The variables in that modelling included the proportion of COVID cases that required hospital treatment.

Another key variable, however, was the effectiveness of contact-tracing, which is now being all but abandoned. The *Age* reported this morning that Victorian authorities were

increasingly adopting a standpoint of “intense pragmatic,” as they were overwhelmed by the state’s more than 20,000 active cases.

Many people who have tested positive for the virus, especially if they are young, are not being contacted by the health department, except in a text message informing them of their result. This means that the authorities have no idea, or interest, in where the individual contracted the virus, who their contacts are, or even the severity of their symptoms.

This is one aspect of the “normalisation” of COVID, which will be intensified over the coming weeks as the government oversees state-sanctioned super-spreading events, including a mass concert in late October, and the Melbourne Cup horse race in early November.

The same approach is being taken by the Coalition state government in NSW, where hundreds of daily cases are still being recorded. NSW Premier Dominic Perrottet, whose installation earlier this month coincided with the state’s reopening, announced yesterday the end of all quarantine measures for international arrivals, provided they are vaccinated and received a negative test before transit. This is another measure that will allow the virus to circulate, and will all but guarantee that new and potentially-more infectious and deadly variants rapidly enter the community as they emerge internationally.

NSW, having already lifted its limited lockdown, is preparing a second “freedom day” for sometime next week, based on 80 percent adult vaccination. Nightclubs will begin to reopen, masks will no longer be required in indoor offices and all caps on attendance at weddings and funerals will be lifted. A full resumption of in person teaching will occur between October 18 and 25, even though more than 200 schools have been forced to close during the current outbreak, while only the children of essential workers have been present.

In a foretaste, the Everest horse race was held in Sydney today, in front of 10,000 spectators. Perrottet, in one of his first acts as premier, doubled the permitted attendance after lobbying from the racing and gaming industry.



To contact the WSWs and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**