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Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE USE

Wednesday 6 October 2021

**Sheed welcomes easing of border restrictions
and introduction of Rapid Antigen Testing**

Independent Member for Shepparton District Suzanna Sheed has welcomed the loosening of restrictions on the border, which will help more Victorians return home and allow people from New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory to enter Victoria from midnight tonight (October 6).

Ms Sheed said today's announcement of the downgrading the Extreme Risk Zones to Red Zones will allow Victorian residents to return following a negative COVID-19 test and home quarantine for 14 days upon their return. Red Zones will switch to Orange Zones allowing people from Victoria, New South Wales, and the Australian Capital Territory to enter Victoria. They will need to take a COVID-19 test within 72 hours of their arrival and isolate until they receive a negative result.

"These changes will bring more Victorians home and offer a greater flexibility to people who rely on travel across the border for family, education, or work commitments," Ms Sheed said.

"Victoria and New South Wales have always been strongly connected and restrictions from travelling between the states has caused emotional upset and financial hardship in the past few months, so I am pleased the Victorian Government found a reasonable way forward.

Ms Sheed welcomed the Victorian Government's introduction of rapid antigen testing in its healthcare system and later at schools, childcare, and correctional facilities.

"Being able to test healthcare staff rapidly will help put their minds at ease while they continue to do their important work through this pandemic and will lead to less furloughing of staff in the coming months.

"Our health system is already feeling the pressure and these tests will help healthcare centres run as safely as possible.

"When these tests eventually roll out in other high-risk settings, such as schools, we will feel safer returning to a more normal setting and spending less time in self isolation.

“While we have yet to see Victoria’s COVID-19 cases reach their peak, we can take comfort in our high vaccination rates.

“Seeing that 88.9 per cent of Greater Shepparton residents and 91.2 per cent of Moira Shire residents received a vaccination, shows how serious our communities are about running this virus to the ground.

“I encourage the community to continue to get tested when symptoms occur or when advised by Health Department officials and get vaccinated.”

ENDS

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