

# Sydney floats pub promise to boost job rate

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Locked-down Sydney residents could enjoy a beer at the pub as soon as next month if the double-dose vaccination rate hits 70 percent, under an official "roadmap to freedom" released on Thursday.

Officials in the eastern state of New South Wales, which includes

Sydney, said stay-at-home orders would be lifted for fully vaccinated people once it hits the interim COVID-19 vaccine target for adults.

The roadmap gave no date but current vaccination rates indicate the 70-percent target may be reached in October.

"A meal with loved ones or a drink with friends is just around the corner," deputy premier John Barilaro pledged.

After 10 weeks of lockdown, the announcement offers more than five million people across Sydney a measure of hope—and an incentive for vaccine laggards to get the jab.

Hair salons, gyms, restaurants and cinemas could also reopen, and students would return to school from October 25.

If the target is reached in October, Sydney residents would have spent up to four months under stay-at-home orders.

The planned easing of restrictions comes despite New South Wales recording 1,405 new cases on Thursday and warnings from doctors' groups of growing pressure on hospitals.

"When you reopen, you expect an increase in case numbers. But if it's in the vaccinated population, our health system won't be troubled by that," state premier Gladys Berejiklian said.

Almost 39,000 cases have been linked to the outbreak that began in Sydney in mid-June.

Further freedoms are promised once 80 percent of people are vaccinated—with Berejiklian suggesting international travel could resume for the first time since Australia closed its borders in March

2020.

That came after Prime Minister Scott Morrison acknowledged the "sacrifice" and "heartbreak" endured by tens of thousands of overseas Australians shut out of their home country by tough border rules.

Australia's government has also mooted the creation of a vaccine passport, which is set to be rolled out ahead of cautious plans to restart international travel later this year.

But unfettered domestic travel could take longer, with some states still pursuing "COVID zero" policies and reluctant to allow free movement.

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