



## Australia's International COVID-19 Vaccination Certificate

From October 2021, the Australian Government is issuing an **International COVID-19 Vaccination Certificate** to outbound travellers.

Information in the certificate comes from the **Australian Immunisation Register**, the official database of vaccinations recorded in Australia. The certificate will be available to **Australian and foreign passport holders** alike.

For protection against forgery, the certificate uses a Quick Response (QR) code known as a **Visible Digital Seal (VDS or VDS-NC)**. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has specified VDS as its standard for health certificates for cross-border air travel. The World Health Organization has endorsed the format. VDS is highly secure and globally interoperable, because like the hundreds of millions of ePassports on issue around the world it uses ICAO public-key infrastructure.

### ***What's in the certificate?***

Included with this information sheet are **official specimens**. They illustrate four of many possible vaccination scenarios that are consistent with the ICAO standard and with vaccination practice in Australia. Each one has:

- the Australian Government **crest**, centred at the top
- the **title**, "International COVID-19 Vaccination Certificate"
- a **header row** containing:
  - the words "Proof of Vaccination"
  - the **issuing state** ("AUS")
  - the version number ("1")
  - a **Unique Vaccination Certificate Identifier (UVCI)**
- the **VDS QR code**, containing all the data elements, as well as signature information for authenticating the certificate
- the holder's **name**, in capitals, with family name first
  - long names wrap onto a second line
  - because of space constraints, the name in the VDS QR code may be shorter than what appears in the plain-English text of the printable PDF
  - the names (and other biodata) in the specimens are fictitious
- **date of birth**, in the format YYYY-MM-DD
- **gender** ('Sex'), given as "M", "F" or "X"
- the holder's **passport number**
  - the numbers in the specimens are from Australian passport specimens
- **vaccination history**, which includes, for each type of vaccine administered, ("Vaccination event") the brand, date, batch number, administering centre and country of each dose
  - the manufacturer name is included in the vaccine brand name
  - the "Dose number" is in chronological order across Vaccination events
- a note at the end explaining abbreviations and codes in the certificate.

### ***Is the certificate valid in both paper and digital form?***

Yes. Travellers receive the certificate as a **PDF**, from which they may load the QR code into a digital wallet or a travel app. Because it contains all the information in the PDF and can be authenticated, the QR code is valid by itself as a digital vaccination credential.

### ***Can someone have more than one certificate?***

There's no limit to the number of valid certificates an individual may hold, for instance if they have **concurrent passports** or passports that reflect **dual nationality**.

### ***How can I tell if the holder is fully vaccinated?***

VDS health certificates don't contain a statement about whether the holder is fully vaccinated. They simply record the holder's **vaccination history**. Whether that history satisfies current health policy is a matter for authorities in countries the traveller visits.

For this reason, VDS health certificates may sometimes only list one dose of a two-dose vaccine.

### ***Where's the expiry date?***

VDS health certificates have **no expiry date** because they make no time-sensitive assessment of whether the holder is fully vaccinated. They simply record the holder's vaccination history. Holders who have further vaccinations can get a new certificate, but the first certificate is not cancelled.

### ***What are the specifications?***

Australia's international certificate complies with the ICAO [specifications](#) for Visible Digital Seals for Non-Constrained Environments (VDS-NC), version 1.1. Australia would be glad to assist any country interested in technical advice on how to meet the specifications and issue VDS certificates.

### ***What does it mean that I can verify the document against Australia's ePassport country key?***

Country Signing Certificate Authority (CSCA) public keys are the root of trust for ICAO's public-key infrastructure, which underpins the ePassports issued by more than 140 countries worldwide. CSCA public keys are available from the [ICAO Public Key Directory](#) and the [German Master List](#). Australia's is also published on the Australian Passport Office [website](#).

Taking advantage of these keys, authorities can use **passport reading machines** at borders and **QR apps** on mobile devices to authenticate – to the same very high level of confidence as a passport chip – that a VDS QR code was written by the purported issuing authority and has not been altered.

### ***How do I upgrade my passport readers? Where do I find QR apps?***

As a rule, passport readers can natively read QR codes. To process VDS, they require relatively minor software updates. Australia has been liaising with industry to make these updates available as soon as possible. We recommend border authorities contact their providers to follow up on this.

It is not hard for suppliers to configure existing government and private sector QR apps, including apps developed for other vaccination certificate formats, to read and authenticate VDS QR codes. New apps with VDS functionality will also emerge as countries begin to adopt the standard.

To ensure there are no gaps in the meantime, the Australian Passport Office has published a simple, free app of its own, called "**VDS-NC Checker**". The app is available in the Apple store. An Android version will be available on or before 27 September in the Google Play store (for devices with a QR reading capability). The app will work if you try it out on the specimens.