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Australia Recognizes Russia's Sputnik V Vaccine for Incoming Travelers

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Bianca De Marchi / EPA / TASS

Australia on Monday recognized Russia's two-dose Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine for travelers entering the country, making it one of the first Western countries to do so as Moscow continues to seek global approval for its jab.

Australia's Department of Health Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) said it obtained information based on published studies from Moscow that Sputnik V reduces severe illness and virus transmission among incoming travelers.

"The recognition of Sputnik will expand options for the return of international students, travel of skilled and unskilled workers to Australia, and travel by business people and elite sports people to our country," it said.

The TGA noted that the studies were conducted prior to the highly transmissible Omicron variant's emergence.

It also stressed that it still does not recognize the single-dose Sputnik Light booster.

Related article: Sputnik V Backer Says Vaccine Hindered By 'Bureaucratic' WHO Approval Obstacles

Sputnik V joins a roster of major Western and Chinese Covid-19 vaccines to be approved by Australia, which requires at least 14 days in between both doses and seven days since the final dose to pass to be allowed entry.

The Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF), which markets Sputnik V worldwide, lauded Australia's decision to open its borders to those vaccinated with the jab.

"Australia joined over 100 other countries, including most recently Israel and Saudi Arabia, that accept travelers vaccinated with Sputnik V," RDIF CEO Kirill Dmitriev said.

Israeli last week lifted a three-day quarantine mandate for tourists vaccinated with Sputnik V, allowing free travel after a negative PCR and a positive serological test.

While Russia touted Sputnik V as the world's first registered Covid-19 vaccine in August 2020, it has not yet been authorized for use by the World Health Organization (WHO) or the European Union. Its fast-track approval ahead of large-scale trials raised concerns, though research published in leading medical journal The Lancet declared it more than 91% effective against the original Covid-19 strain.

The head of the WHO in Russia said Sunday the vaccine's developers had submitted all the required information needed for its approval process and further inspections will take place in February.

Australia's Embassy in Moscow told the state-run RIA Novosti news agency after TGA's announcement that it "no longer deals with visa issues" and forwards all applications in Russia to its embassy in Belgrade.

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