

Matt, Fleur, Angus and Pip Curry at the Echuca-Moama border.
Picture: REBECCA PILGRIM



VIC PERMITS ADD TO BORDER TURMOIL

SHANNON DEERY
OLIVIA JENKINS

THE state government is under pressure to reclassify parts of its new travel permit system amid confusion and frustration at border communities.

More than 54,000 permits were issued by Tuesday afternoon after the new system failed to launch on time on Monday night. But frustration continued for residents near both the NSW and South Australian borders, who said the system was an overreach.

Under a border bubble arrangement with NSW, Victorians from as far south as Bendigo can freely cross the border and travel as far as Wagga Wagga.

But any Victorians outside the bubble can't cross the border without having to take a COVID-19 test and isolate until they get a negative result.

Kylie, who didn't want to give her surname, said her NSW-based parents could visit her in Victoria with no checks, but she was forced to isolate after visiting them. "I fully support the bubble, but it doesn't make sense," she said. "All of the NSW border bubble can travel freely throughout Victoria, as long as it is necessary, and I can't."

All the staff and students who live in South Australia but attend the primary school in Apsley in Victoria would be forced to apply for a permit daily.

Liberty Victoria president Julia Kretzenbacher said there was a lot of uncertainty with the new permit system. "Liberty Victoria is concerned about the indefinite exclusion of Victorians stuck in red zones, with no option of home quarantine for those Victorians if they wish to come home," Ms Kretzenbacher said.

Opposition Leader Michael O'Brien wants the green zone permits scrapped. "That seems to be just a massive bureaucratic overreach. It doesn't keep anyone safe. It simply makes it difficult for Victorians to come home and come home safely," he said.

A declaration that people hadn't been to a red zone in the previous 14 days confused Victorians returning from regional NSW, which moved from a hot spot to an orange classification at 6pm on Monday. A government spokesman confirmed the new classification and said people in newly orange zones could apply for a permit.

Matt Curry crossed the Echuca-Moama border from his home in Albury with his family where cars entered Victoria via a single lane. He said: "It's a lot of effort for not many cases. You just have to grin and bear it."