

Victorian Government submission to the Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

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Executive summary

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has had a significant impact on Victoria's economy and society. Tragically, the virus has claimed the lives of 19 Victorians. However, the actions that were taken by the Victorian Government, in close collaboration with the Commonwealth and other states and territories, have avoided the disasters that have been experienced overseas. Through critical decisions and targeted investments, Victoria has saved lives, protected the health system, and slowed the spread of the virus.

The Victorian Government used its emergency management arrangements to plan the initial phases of its response and then temporarily reorganised itself to more effectively coordinate the overarching response to the pandemic. This aligned with the reforms taken to enhance interjurisdictional cooperation through the National Cabinet. The success of the National Cabinet has been its focus on developing common goals and principles, while recognising that jurisdictions retain sovereignty to implement policies according to local circumstances. This has enabled states, territories and the Commonwealth to leverage each other's policies and programs to support all Australians.

We have enforced tough but necessary restrictions to limit the spread of the virus, enforcing these through a declaration of the State of Emergency under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* (Vic).

The Victorian Government has invested almost \$2 billion to strengthen the state's health care system to enhance capacity to manage a 'worst case scenario' of the pandemic. This has included the largest testing blitz in the nation to ensure that the full extent of virus transmission is understood.

Recognising the significant impact the pandemic has had on Victoria's economy and society, the Victorian Government has also invested more than \$8 billion to support and rebuild the economy and enhance the delivery of critical services to Victorians. This includes \$2 billion to strengthen the health care system.

Thanks to continuing low community transmission and high rates of testing, Victoria is now in a position to start easing restrictions in line with the framework agreed by the National Cabinet but tailored to Victoria's circumstances.

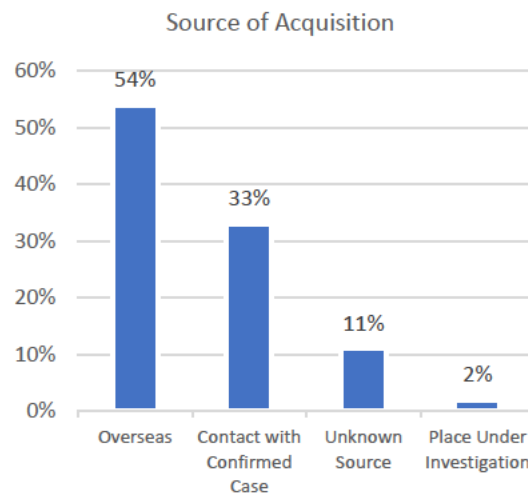
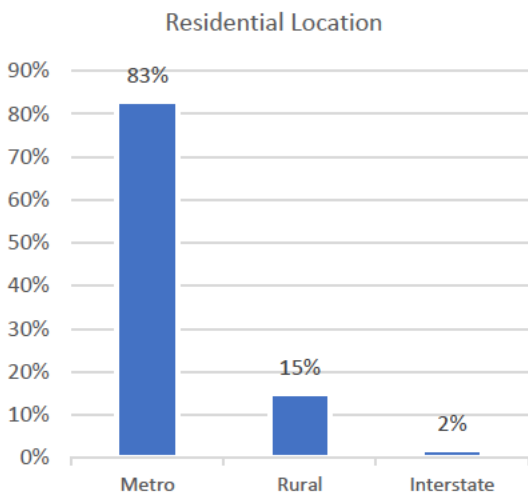
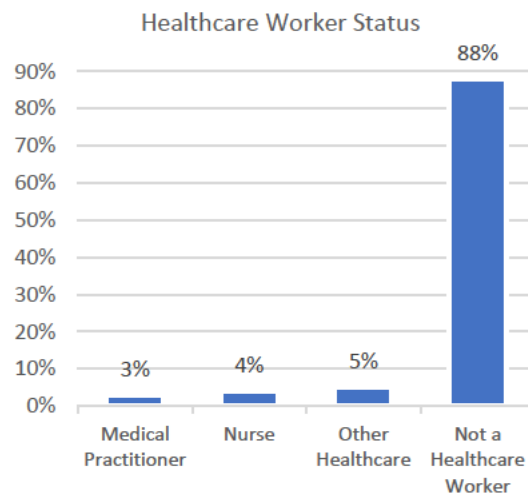
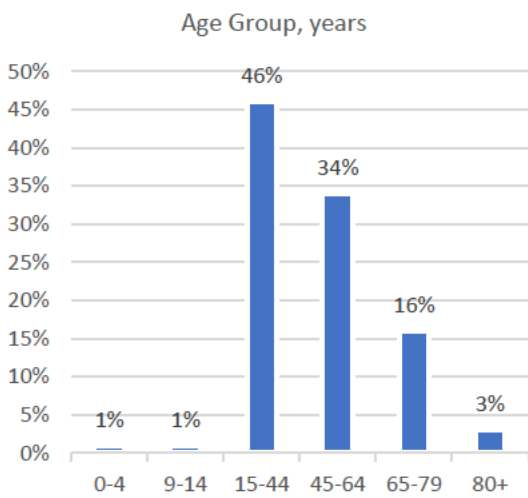
While the pandemic is not over, the focus will turn to planning for the longer-term recovery of Victoria's economy and society. There are opportunities to build on the goodwill engendered through the National Cabinet process and promote continued interjurisdictional cooperation to coordinate effective policy responses for longer term recovery. Jurisdictions must continue to work together to coordinate responses that effectively support recovery and deliver the reforms necessary to reach a post pandemic normal. There is also an important role for the Commonwealth Government in supporting states and territories that undertake investments and reform that will support the recovery.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) impacts to Victoria

The Victorian Government, on the advice of its Chief Health Officer, took swift and decisive action to slow the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) in our community and save lives. Even with these efforts, the virus has impacted Victorians. As at 25 May 2020, 19 Victorians had tragically died and more than 1,605 confirmed cases had been reported.

Demographics of infection

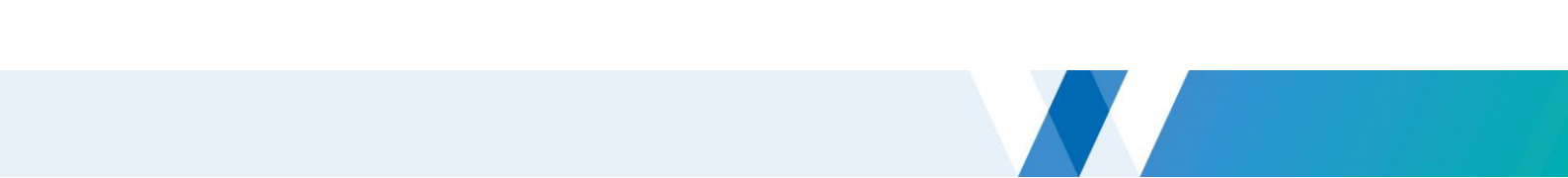
As of 13 May 2020, there have been five confirmed cases of coronavirus in the Victorian Aboriginal community. Other demographic data is presented below.



Other health impacts

While the most immediate health impacts are related to Victoria's direct response to the pandemic and individuals infected with or exposed to coronavirus (COVID-19), there are wider health system impacts that Victoria is experiencing.

Initial data shows a reduction in GP appointments, routine medical appointment attendance rates and emergency department presentations and admissions. Patients may be avoiding care due to



concerns about coronavirus (COVID-19), such as fear of infection or placing a burden on the health system. Deferral of urgent and chronic care needs, even though these needs have not been restricted, has resulted in increased death rates in other countries and is something Victoria is monitoring.

In accordance with National Cabinet decisions, non-urgent elective surgery, specialist clinic and public dental activity were suspended on 25 March 2020. While further National Cabinet decisions meant that some of these procedures resumed in a gradual manner from 27 April 2020, the longer-term effects of this suspension for the wider health system cannot be quantified at this stage.

There are also early reports of changed substance use and consumption. Some traditional alcohol and drug support services have been adversely affected by physical distancing measures undertaken as part of Victoria's coronavirus (COVID-19) response.

Mental health

Evidence suggests that the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the necessary introduction of physical distancing measures is having an adverse impact on the mental health and wellbeing of Victorians. Currently available data suggests higher levels of anxiety and psychological distress across the general population.

People with existing mental illnesses and other vulnerable groups – including older Victorians, young people, and those who already experience loneliness and social isolation – may be particularly vulnerable to deteriorating mental health during this time. Some people with severe, complex and chronic mental illness have disconnected from mental health services.

There is strong evidence from previous pandemics and broader research that there are risks of increasing mental ill health, including new presentations of mental distress and illness, increased substance use and increased risk of suicide in the longer term.

While the full impact on Victoria's mental health is yet to be quantified, an increase in presentations to general practitioners and telephone advice services such as Beyond Blue, Kids Helpline and Lifeline – linked to anxiety about coronavirus (COVID-19) – has been reported. Over the same period of time, early evidence suggests public health service mental health admissions and emergency department presentations have declined, suggesting that a significant proportion of consumers may be reluctant to access care due to concerns about contracting coronavirus (COVID-19) or placing a burden on the health system.

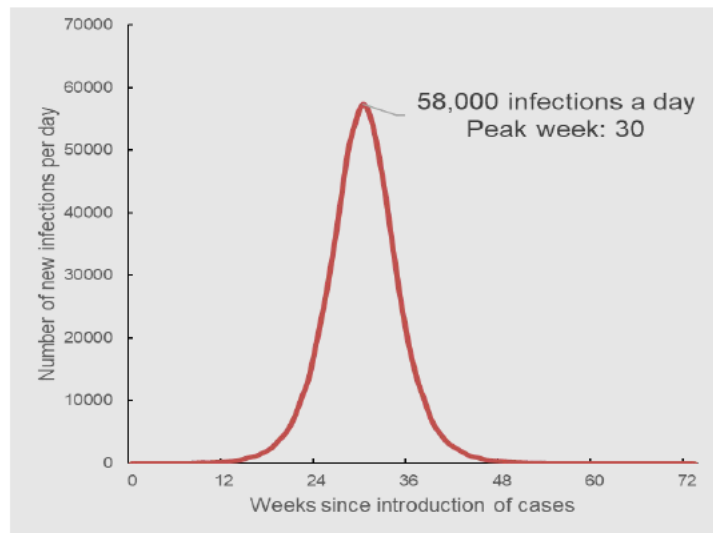
The Victorian Government provided \$59.4 million to help meet demand as Victorians reach out for help with stress, isolation and uncertainty. The Government is now preparing for the likely increase in demand for services as the longer-term economic impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19), including unemployment, financial loss and instability, are felt by Victorians.

Health modelling

Coronavirus (COVID-19) has impacted the health of Victorians and, tragically, led to the death of 19 people. This impact could have been significantly worse. Modelling, developed by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, Monash University and the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity, found that if Victoria had taken a 'business as usual' approach, the health system would have been overwhelmed and thousands of people would have died. It confirmed that

the key to success has been the physical distancing measures that have been enacted by the Victorian Government to limit the spread of the virus.

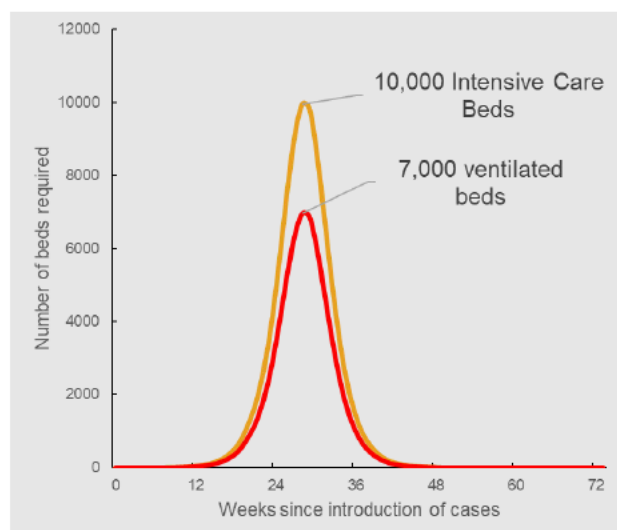
This modelling (based on the same transmission model used by the Commonwealth Government) found that if Victoria had only enforced quarantine and isolation measures (i.e. isolation of confirmed cases, quarantine of their contacts and quarantine of returning travellers), Victoria would have been managing up to 58,000 infections per day at the peak of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.



The impact on the state's health system would have been profound and exceptionally difficult to manage with up to 9,200 coronavirus (COVID-19) presentations to hospital per day.

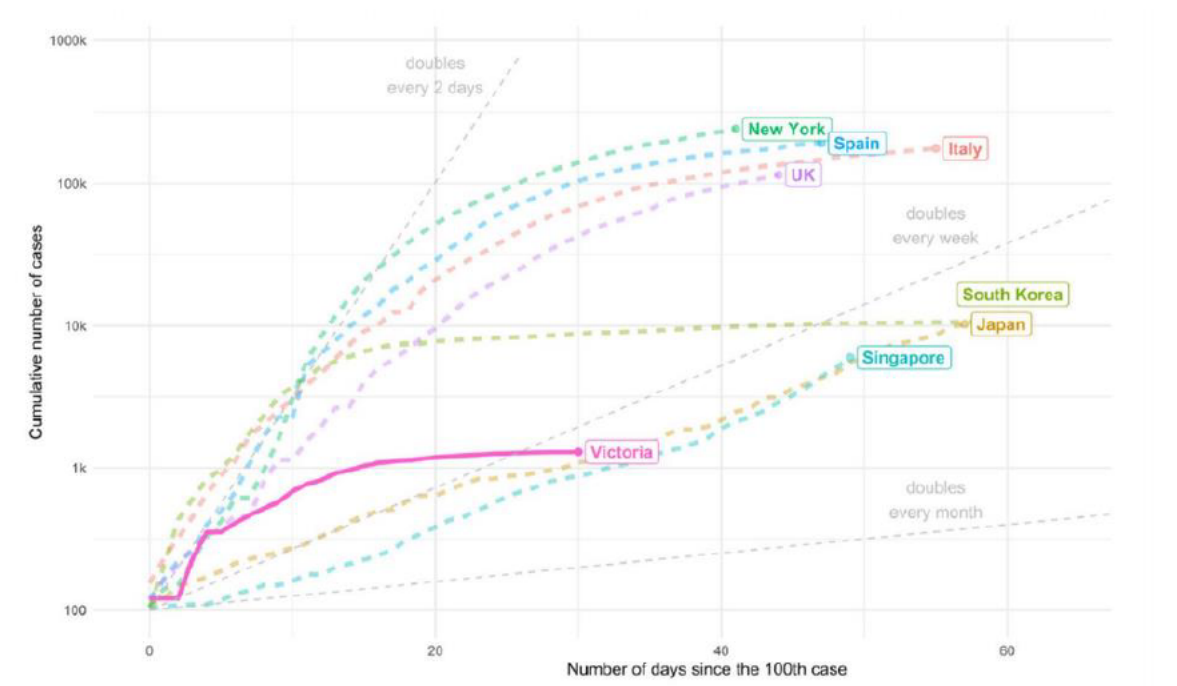
To put this into perspective, there were 1,860,000 presentations to Victorian emergency departments in 2018-19 – giving a daily average of 5,095. A coronavirus (COVID-19) related addition of 9,200 would have almost tripled this, making the timely delivery of quality care extremely challenging.

Before the pandemic, Victoria's public and private health services had around 450 fully equipped and staffed ICU beds. While the Victorian Government is continuing work to increase ICU capacity, this model predicted that the state would have needed 10,000 ICU beds, including 7,000 ventilated beds at peak demand.



In line with other countries where coronavirus (COVID-19) has spread more widely and rapidly, the death toll would have been substantial at 36,000 in total, with up to 650 deaths per day at the peak.

By contrast, the measures introduced by the Victorian Government have meant that our state has had a very different experience. As the chart below shows, the curve reflecting the number of Victorian cases has flattened.



Victorian modelling also considered what might happen if restrictions were eased too quickly or too broadly.

Based on case numbers on 18 April 2020, and an effective reproduction number (number of infections passed on by a person with the virus) of 2.5, revised forecasts indicated that Victoria would see 8,420 cases, 505 hospital presentations, 151 ICU admissions and 72 deaths in just three weeks. The potential for such rapid growth in the coronavirus (COVID-19) caseload demonstrates the importance of developing a considered, evidence-based approach to lifting restrictions.

Economic impacts and economic modelling

While the Victorian Government has minimised the public health impacts of coronavirus (COVID-19), the pandemic has had a significant effect on the Victorian economy.

The economic outlook has changed significantly since the start of 2020 and coronavirus (COVID-19) poses unprecedented challenges for the Victorian economy. Although the stimulatory interventions of the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments and the Reserve Bank will support the economy, the negative economic effects of coronavirus (COVID-19) will still be substantial.

The economic shock from coronavirus (COVID-19) includes a fall in domestic and global demand due to lower incomes and loss of consumer and business confidence, disruptions to global supply chains, and the broader impact to the economy.

Department of Treasury and Finance modelling, based on the restrictions of late April 2020 remaining in place for six months, estimated that Victorian real gross state product (GSP) could be about 14 per cent lower in the June and September 2020 quarters relative to forecasts in the 2019-20 Budget Update. These estimates are equivalent to a fall of 6.75 per cent in real GSP in 2020, which is comparable to the International Monetary Fund's recent forecast of a 6.7 per cent decline for Australia. Under this scenario, Victoria's unemployment rate could rise to 11 per cent, with job losses peaking at around 270 000 in the September quarter and Victorian property prices could decline by up to 9 per cent from March to December 2020.

Victorian labour market conditions deteriorated significantly in April 2020. The latest data shows that employment declined by 127,100 people – the largest fall on record. The unemployment rate rose to 6.0 per cent in April 2020 and would have been significantly higher if the labour force participation rate had not fallen by a record 2 per centage points. Victoria's underutilisation rate (which includes both unemployed and under-employed workers) increased to over 20 per cent, higher than during the 1990's recession, while hours worked – the indicator most closely aligned with economic activity – decreased by over 10 per cent in the month.

The economic shock of coronavirus (COVID-19) is having a disproportionate and significant impact on women. Prior to this pandemic, women were less likely to participate in the labour force, and were over-represented in low paid, casual and part-time work, making up just 37.7 per cent of the full-time workforce. Coronavirus (COVID-19) has compounded existing inequalities with the number of employed Victorian women dropping at twice the rate of the number of employed men since January 2020. Across all industries, women are more likely to have lost work when compared with men. Women are overrepresented in the most affected industries such as the arts, hospitality, retail, and education and training. Leading indicators of job vacancies have also fallen sharply, suggesting that labour market conditions will remain weak for some time. The JobKeeper program is, however, expected to have offset some of the weakness in labour market conditions.

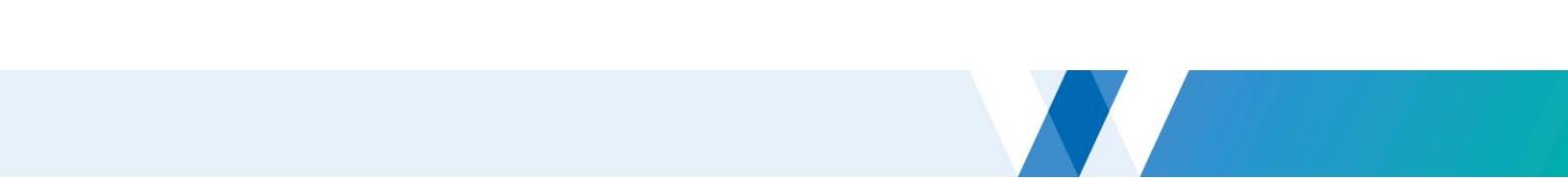
Governance structures

The Victorian Government has ensured that its response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has been comprehensive and coordinated across government. This has included using the emergency management expertise developed through previous emergencies and making improvements to governance structures to enhance the government's response.

Emergency management arrangements

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has been managed as a Class 2 public health emergency¹ under the Victorian Government's emergency management arrangements, as outlined in the

¹ A Class 2 emergency is a major emergency that is not a Class 1 emergency or a warlike act or act of terrorism (Class 1 emergencies are either major fires or emergencies with a Victorian fire services agency as a control agency). A Class 2



Emergency Management Act 2013 (Vic). In February 2020, the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services was appointed as the control agency with primary responsibility for responding to the coronavirus (COVID-19) public health emergency and coordinating inter-agency responses at the state level. Its work is guided by legislation including the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic)*, the *Emergency Management Act 2013 (Vic)* and the Commonwealth *Biosecurity Act 2015 (Cth)*, to safeguard the health and wellbeing of all Victorians.

On 10 March 2020, the Victorian Government released the *COVID-19 Pandemic Plan for the Victorian Health Sector*. This plan aligns with the *Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)* and outlines a four-stage process for managing the pandemic.

- Stage 1 - initial containment
- Stage 2 - targeted action
- Stage 3 - peak action
- Stage 4 - stand-down and recovery

In addition to this plan and the *Emergency Management Act 2013 (Vic)*, governance and emergency management arrangements are outlined in the *State Health Emergency Response Plan* and the *State Operational Arrangements for COVID-19 (Emergency Management Victoria)*. These documents guide Victoria's effective management of, and coordinated response to, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Key elements of the Victorian Government's emergency management arrangements include:

- State Control Team – COVID-19: provides advice and recommendations to the State Controller – Health. The team also oversees the implementation of operational actions of emergency management agencies in the context of operational consequence management, response, relief and recovery.
- State Controller – Health: ensures a coordinated emergency response, including the provision of consistent public information, awareness of resource and surge capacity across agencies, emergency call taking capability and whole of government reporting.
- Emergency Management Commissioner: has responsibility for coordination before, during and after major emergencies, including the management of consequences of an emergency.

These arrangements have ensured that Victoria is set up to provide an effective and coordinated response to mitigate the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) and ensure a safe and supported environment for the citizens of Victoria during all phases of the emergency.

On 16 March 2020, the Minister for Health declared a State of Emergency under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic)*. The declaration was made based on advice from the Victorian Chief Health Officer – and after consultation with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the Emergency Management Commissioner – that coronavirus (COVID-19) represented an emergency causing a serious and potentially catastrophic risk to public health in Victoria. Further details are provided under 'Victoria's Enforcement Response'.

emergency exists when there is a state-wide emergency of likely major impact. The response in a Class 2 emergency is a collaboration across the health sector, government agencies and the community.

Reorganisation of government

Government and public service redesign

The Victorian Government and Victorian Public Service (VPS) has been temporarily re-organised to support an effective and rapid response to coronavirus (COVID-19).

This reorganisation includes the creation of a Crisis Council of Cabinet (CCC) as the core decision making forum for the Victorian Government on all matters related to the emergency, including implementing the outcomes of the National Cabinet. The eight members of the CCC have been sworn-in with new portfolios and have responsibility for leading the coordination of our coronavirus (COVID-19) response across government.

The CCC was established on 3 April 2020 and the following new Ministers were sworn in on the same day:

- The Hon Daniel Andrews MP, Premier (Chair)
- The Hon James Merlino MP, Minister for the Coordination of Education and Training – COVID-19
- Tim Pallas MP, Minister for the Coordination of Treasury and Finance – COVID-19
- The Hon Jacinta Allan MP, Minister for the Coordination of Transport – COVID-19
- The Hon Jenny Mikakos MP, Minister for the Coordination of Health and Human Services – COVID-19
- The Hon Jill Hennessy MP, Minister for the Coordination of Justice and Community Safety – COVID-19
- The Hon Martin Pakula MP, Minister for the Coordination of Jobs, Precincts and Regions – COVID 19
- The Hon Lisa Neville MP, Minister for the Coordination of Environment, Land, Water and Planning – COVID-19.

The most senior levels of the VPS have been structured to focus on eight core missions to help respond to the emergency, with Lead Secretaries directly accountable to the Premier for mission delivery. Departmental Secretaries have appointed Associate Secretaries to manage the day-to-day administration of their departments and support portfolio Ministers. These changes have been made to ensure that government and the public service can focus on responding rapidly to the crisis and put the state in the best position to accelerate recovery.

The eight public service missions are:

- **Health emergency** – Leadership of the whole-of-government response to the health crisis.
- **Economic emergency** – Leadership of the Government's economic emergency response to maintain a viable and sustainable economic and fiscal position through the health crisis.
- **Economic program delivery, supply, logistics and procurement** – Leadership for ensuring business continuity in industry sectors which are critical to the economy and to the response effort.
- **Continuity of essential services – People** – Identifying, mitigating and responding to risks to (non-health) social and human service delivery and outcomes related to the crisis.
- **Continuity of essential services – Economic** – Identifying, mitigating and responding to crisis-related risk to delivery of essential physical infrastructure services.
- **Economic recovery (private sector)** – Leadership for the identification of recovery strategies and actions for Victoria to recover economically post-crisis, including new industry and trade opportunities that can be captured.

- **Restoration of public services – People** – Whole-of-government strategy to address key social and human service backlogs and deficits created by the crisis and support social and economic recovery.
- **Restoration of public services – Economic (public sector)** – Whole-of-government strategy to address any infrastructure deficits arising from the crisis and support economic recovery by rapidly re-commencing and commissioning infrastructure projects.

There are also two enabling programs:

- **Critical risks and opportunities** – Leadership for the identification of critical risks, vulnerabilities and post-event reform opportunities for the public sector.
- **Behaviour change, social cohesion and communications** – Leadership for the design and coordinated implementation of communication, community activation and engagement activities.

The arrangements are in place until the end of September 2020 and will then be reviewed.

National Cabinet

Recognising the importance of effective coordinated national responses to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the Victorian Government has been an active participant in the National Cabinet.

Established by the Council of Australian Governments on 13 March 2020, the National Cabinet has provided a nationally consistent approach to deal with the health, economic, societal and public safety impacts of coronavirus (COVID-19).

The National Cabinet has been effective because it has established national principles that recognise the sovereignty of states and territories to implement policies according to local circumstances. The National Cabinet operates in accordance with the longstanding conventions of Cabinet governance, including the principles of collective responsibility and solidarity.

The National Cabinet has enabled states, territories and the Commonwealth to co-design policy responses to ensure they are complementary and focus on achieving common aims. Key decisions taken by the National Cabinet have included:

- a national baseline of physical distancing restrictions implemented across jurisdictions
- principles to help ‘hibernate’ economic activity – such as the moratorium on evictions
- codes and principles for sectors that are particularly vulnerable to coronavirus (COVID-19) including aged care, boarding schools and corrections facilities
- establishment of the preconditions necessary for easing restrictions
- a three-step framework for easing restrictions.

The National Cabinet has been supported by health advice from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee, providing an opportunity for states and territories to feed into the advice being considered by the National Cabinet.

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Enforcement of restrictions

State of Emergency under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* (Vic)

On 16 March 2020, the Minister for Health, on advice of the Victorian Chief Health Officer and after consulting with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the Emergency Management Commissioner, declared a State of Emergency throughout Victoria, under section 198(1) of the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* (Vic) (PHWBA), due to the serious risk to public health from Novel Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19).²

The declaration took immediate effect and was in operation from 16 March 2020 until midnight 13 April 2020, the maximum period of four weeks stipulated by section 198(7)(b) of the PHWBA.

On 12 April 2020, the Minister for Health, on advice of the Victorian Chief Health Officer and after consulting with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the Emergency Management Commissioner, extended the declaration of a State of Emergency for a further period of four weeks, continuing in force from midnight 13 April 2020 until 11.59pm on 11 May 2020, under section 198(7)(c) of the PHWBA.³

On 11 May 2020, this declaration was further extended by the Minister for Health under section 198(7)(c) of the PHWBA until 11.59pm on 31 May 2020.⁴ This ensures the Victorian Government can continue its strict enforcement of physical distancing, isolation and other emergency directions to slow the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) while easing some restrictions. Further details are provided under 'Easing Restrictions under Planning the Next Phase of the Coronavirus Response'.

The decisions to make and extend the declaration of a State of Emergency were based on advice of the Victorian Chief Health Officer that there was an urgent need to take steps to eliminate or reduce the serious and potentially catastrophic risk to public health posed by coronavirus (COVID-19), given the following considerations at the time:

- an effective treatment or other measure to eliminate or reduce the risk to the health of human beings has not been identified – there remains no vaccination and no widely used pharmaceutical countermeasure to coronavirus (COVID-19)
- the location, immediacy and seriousness of threat – sustained human transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) has impacted the healthcare systems of several countries and posed a threat to the entire Victorian population and healthcare system
- the nature, scale and effect of harm – the morbidity and mortality rate of coronavirus (COVID-19) remains a serious threat to the community, especially the elderly, chronically ill and vulnerable, and may place a significant burden on Victoria's health system

² Special Gazette No [S.129](#), of Monday 16 March 2020.

³ Special Gazette No [S.193](#), of Sunday 12 April 2020.

⁴ Special Gazette No [S.231](#), of Tuesday 12 May 2020.

- the emergency powers – such as powers to quarantine and restrict movement, would assist infection prevention to slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19), and are only available under a declaration of a State of Emergency.

Directions issued

The State of Emergency declaration enables the Victorian Chief Health Officer to allow authorised officers to exercise public health risk powers and emergency powers for the purposes of eliminating or reducing the serious risk to public health (sections 190, 200, PHWBA) to respond to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This includes emergency powers to:

- detain any person or group of persons in an emergency area for the period reasonably necessary to eliminate or reduce a serious risk to public health
- restrict the movement of any person or group of persons within the emergency area
- prevent any person or group of persons from entering an emergency area
- give any other directions that the authorised officer considers is reasonably necessary to protect public health.

Between 16 March 2020 and 11 May 2020, a series of directions were made in the exercise of the public health risk powers and emergency powers under the PHWBA. These directions have been updated over time to respond to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, including to reflect National Cabinet decisions. These directions are listed by topic in 'Appendix 1'. It is anticipated that further directions will be made in response to the public health crisis as it continues to develop.

Prescribed offences

On 28 March 2020, regulations were made to prescribe certain offences under the PHWBA as infringement offences for which penalty infringement notices can be issued.⁵ These offences related to:

- refusing or failing to comply with emergency directions (sections 200 and 203(1) of the PHWBA) or public health risk power directions (sections 190 and 193(1) of the PHWBA) or a Chief Health Officer direction to provide information (section 188(2) of the PHWBA), and
- hindering or obstructing an authorised officer (section 183 of the PHWBA) under the PHWBA.

After the regulations were made, the Department of Health and Human Services delegated enforcement of the PHWBA to Victoria Police, enabling police officers to issue on-the-spot infringement notices carrying a penalty of 10 penalty units (\$1,652) for individuals and 60 penalty units (\$9,913) for body corporates.

As at 13 May 2020, 43,829 coronavirus (COVID-19) police checks had been completed with 2,894 fines issued and 833 warnings issued.

⁵ *Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Infringements) Regulations 2020 (Regulations)*.

Operation Sentinel

Operation Sentinel was initiated by Victoria Police to enforce Victorian Chief Health Officer and Deputy Chief Health Officer emergency and public health risk directions. Stage 3 directions came into effect at 11.59pm on 30 March 2020 in Victoria.

Operation Sentinel has included conducting spot checks on returning travellers who should be in self-isolation, enforcing bans on indoor and outdoor gatherings at non-essential venues and businesses, proactively patrolling places of mass gathering such as beaches and shopping centres to ensure restrictions are being complied with and generally enforcing physical distancing requirements.

Victoria Police officers across the state are actively enforcing the powers based on directions given by the Victorian Chief Health Officer in relation to staying at home, restricted activity and isolation directions as per the State of Emergency declaration. Victoria Police ask the community to adhere to these directions for their safety and that of the broader community.

Victoria Police was authorised to issue on the spot fines to people and businesses who refused or failed to comply with the directions. If people breach these directions, they face on-the-spot fines of \$1,652 for individuals and \$9,913 for businesses. People can also be issued with an official warning, directed to return home, or charged on summons where a person repeatedly refuses to obey a direction or blatantly disregards the restrictions.

Operation Soteria

On 28 March 2020, the Victorian Government introduced a mandatory quarantine operation, consistent with the National Cabinet decision that all people arriving from international destinations would be subject to a 14-day quarantine in hotels to slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). As at 21 May 2020, 10,969 people have been subject to mandatory quarantine in Victoria. While there are early indications that demand for repatriation flights is decreasing, there may be a need to continue Operation Soteria for several months.

To support the health and wellbeing of quarantined travellers, several changes have been made to the service model since inception. These have included greater social and health supports, additional welfare checks, and placement of nurses at each hotel.

At various points throughout Operation Soteria, Victoria has been operating at maximum resourcing capacity. Whilst there is additional bed stock in Melbourne, there have been capacity challenges with the wrap around support required to manage passengers in quarantine including security, catering, medical support, authorised officers, agency coordination and management staff. The Victorian Government has worked closely with the Commonwealth Government, through the National Coordination Mechanism, to effectively manage capacity risks.

Any changes to the current quarantine model will be dependent on nationally effective screening, testing, and tracing of coronavirus (COVID-19) cases and requires consideration by the National Cabinet.

Strengthening Victoria's health system

To address the physical and mental health impacts associated with the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the Victorian Government has made significant investments to enhance capability.

Hospitals and health services

Based on early modelling projections, the Victorian Government committed almost \$2 billion to increase the capacity of our health services to ensure the Victorian health system was ready to respond to a worst-case pandemic scenario.

To date, this investment has included:

- ordering additional equipment and undertaking infrastructure works to increase Victoria's ICU capacity,
- ordering additional personal protective equipment and supplies to ensure our health workers have the protection they need,
- funding additional workforce training to upskill and increase the capabilities of our health workers,
- ensuring dedicated funding is available to backfill essential staff should workers need to self-isolate due to infection or exposure.

When complete, the health system's surge capacity will give Victoria the ability to quickly scale up and expand hospital bed capacity if or when required. This has included commissioning currently unused or underutilised facilities such as the former Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and the former Geelong Private Hospital, as well as increasing ICU and other capacity at Bendigo Hospital, Shepparton Hospital, The Alfred Hospital, Austin Hospital, Monash Medical Centre Clayton and Casey Hospital. The additional inpatient and ICU capacity will not only help manage increased demand from coronavirus (COVID-19), but also ensure hospitals can continue to treat all patients requiring care throughout this time.

The Victorian Government has also entered into an agreement with private hospital operators to effectively have one health system in Victoria for the duration of the pandemic response. This is complementary to the Commonwealth Government's commitment to guarantee the viability of private hospital operators and will ensure access to private facilities and workforces are available for the state's coronavirus (COVID-19) response.

Before the suspension of non-urgent elective surgery, the Victorian Government allocated additional funding for an elective surgery blitz ahead of the predicted peak of the pandemic. Non-urgent elective surgery activity was suspended in Victoria on 25 March 2020 and since 27 April 2020 has been resumed in a staged manner. In line with National Cabinet decisions, this approach ensures people are getting the care they need without unnecessary delay, while capacity for the coronavirus (COVID-19) response remains available including appropriate levels of personal protective equipment.

The Victorian Government has centralised ordering and distribution of priority personal protective equipment, swabs, hand sanitisers and critical equipment to ensure essential supplies reach areas with the greatest clinical need. The centralised coordination aims to protect and manage the health of patients and our critical health workforce. Many suppliers are struggling to manage the workload

associated with both a large increase in orders and supply constraints. A single point of contact with the government brings important relief and clarity.

Hotels for Heroes

The Victorian Government introduced the coronavirus (COVID-19) emergency accommodation for critical workers program, Hotels for Heroes.

Originally, this program was designed to provide free hotel accommodation to allow hospital workers and paramedics on the front line of Victoria's coronavirus (COVID-19) response to self-isolate, if they were unable to safely self-isolate at home.

The program was expanded to include police, firefighters and other critical frontline workers, aged care workers, workers in primary care settings, disability support workers and community-based pharmacy workers.

Public health

Vaccination research

Victorian Government funding is fast-tracking new treatments and vaccines for coronavirus (COVID-19) through increased infection and immunity work. In early March 2020, \$6 million was provided to the Peter Doherty Institute which is working with the Burnet Institute and other experts to ensure Victoria is doing its part to support the development of a vaccine.

Pandemic containment activities

The Victorian Government has committed almost \$57 million for coronavirus (COVID-19) containment activities since the pandemic commenced. This includes increasing Victoria's disease surveillance capability and contact tracing, increased testing, the establishment of rapid response and outbreak control teams as well as increased communications to ensure the public is well informed. It also includes an additional \$8 million for the work of our world-leading research institutes to better understand transmission, immunity and the long-term health impacts of coronavirus (COVID-19).

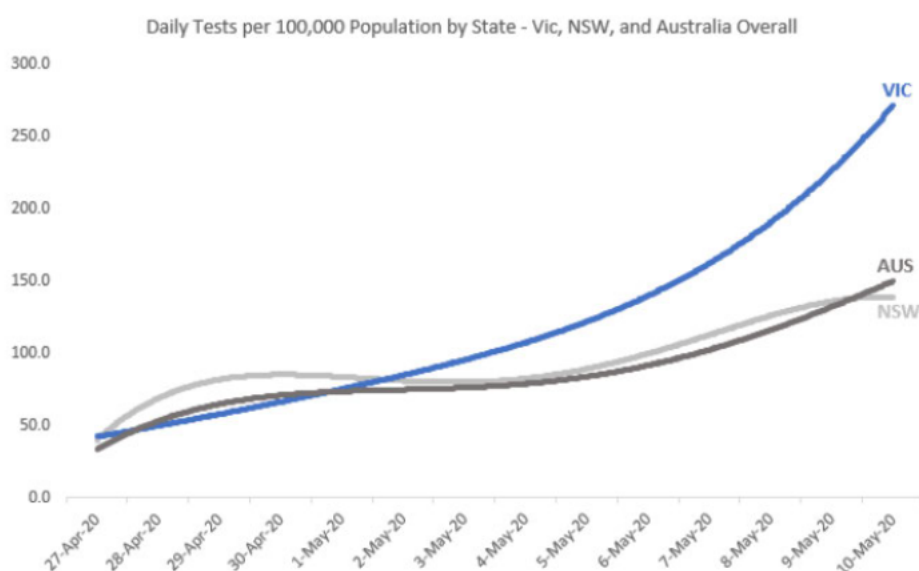
Investments to support easing restrictions

Expanded testing

To ensure Victoria is confident about who in the community has coronavirus (COVID-19), funding has been provided to expand testing. This investment includes expanded fixed-clinic testing capacity and active case finding, mobile testing units, regional testing hubs and sewage testing to help identify change in community transmission.

On 27 April 2020, the Victorian Government started a testing blitz with the aim to test up to 100,000 people over two weeks to better understand how coronavirus (COVID-19) is spreading in the community and help build the evidence base to inform decisions about potentially easing public movement restrictions. Increased testing provides population level surveillance testing through a combination of drive-through and walk-up clinics, as well as new mobile screening clinics to visit homes and workplaces.

During the blitz, more than 161,000 people were tested across the state. Testing will continue to be a big part of the Victorian Government's response in the weeks and months to come. Between 1 January 2020 and 25 May 2020, more than 431,870 tests have been performed. Widespread testing will ensure we have the best possible data to inform changes to restrictions and that we keep Victorians as safe as possible. As at 24 May 2020, Victoria had conducted 63.4 tests per 1,000 people. If Victoria were a nation it would rank 6th in the world in per capita testing.



Improved trace and response capacity

The Victorian Government has significantly expanded its trace and response capacity with around 1,000 staff working for the public health response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic at the Department of Health and Human Services. These staff are doing the important work of case and contact management, triage and information, and outbreak management.

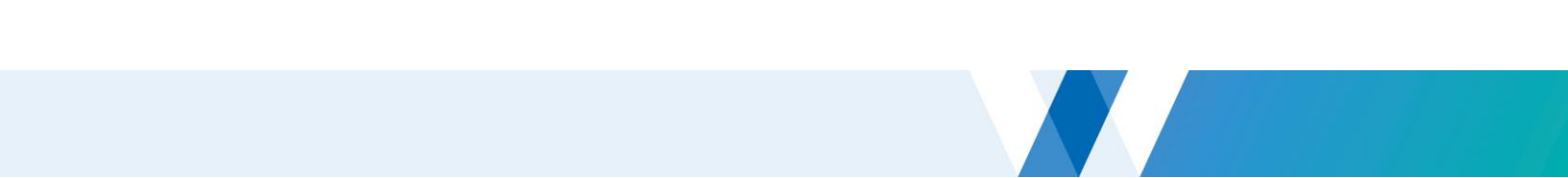
To ensure Victoria has the appropriate trace and response capacity, additional investments have been made to establish a Coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreak Joint Intelligence Unit to support outbreak preparedness and identify and respond to outbreak risks.

As part of this Unit, the Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions and Department of Justice and Community Safety will ensure rapid sharing of intelligence with WorkSafe to alert them to concerns about potential occupational health and safety breaches and ensure consistency of advice. Victoria Police will conduct spot checks of venues to ensure compliance with the directions of the Victorian Chief Health Officer.

Mental health

On 12 April 2020, Premier Daniel Andrews and the Minister for Mental Health, Martin Foley, announced a \$59.4 million package to help meet the demand for mental health services during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The package includes \$17.8 million to begin the first phase of the roll out of 170 extra youth and adult acute mental health beds, as well as funding to commence the state-wide rollout of the Hospital



Outreach Post-Suicidal Engagement (HOPE) program, both key recommendations of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.

In addition, the package provides \$6.7 million to expand online and phone counselling services through Beyond Blue, Lifeline, Kids Helpline and Suicide Line Victoria as well as \$6 million to fast track Orygen Youth Health's new eOrygen platform, which will provide online therapy and peer support for young people. In addition to this package, returned travellers who are placed in quarantine in hotels for a self-isolation period of 14 days are provided with mental health support by the Victorian Government during their stay.

On 15 May 2020, an additional \$19.5 million was announced to implement Royal Commission recommendations to address critical workforce shortages, support the continued roll out of suicide prevention programs and help in the continued engagement of Victorians with a lived experience of mental illness.

Victoria, with New South Wales and the National Mental Health Commission, co-led the development of a National Mental Health Pandemic Response Plan which was presented to the National Cabinet and released publicly on 15 May 2020.

Supporting Victoria's economy and society

The Victorian Government is investing more than \$8 billion to support and rebuild the Victorian economy in an effort to limit the damage of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Economic Survival Package

On 21 March 2020, the Victorian Government announced a \$1.7 billion Economic Survival Package to support Victorian businesses and workers survive the devastating impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The package includes seven key initiatives designed to support small and medium sized businesses.

Payroll tax refunds and waivers

The Victorian Government is providing full payroll tax refunds with an investment of more than \$550 million for the 2019-20 financial year to small businesses with payrolls of less than \$3 million. This initiative will support more than 24,000 businesses and up to 400,000 workers throughout the crisis.

As at 19 May 2020, 18,357 businesses had received payroll tax refunds, worth \$486 million.

The State Revenue Office has also undertaken an outreach program to encourage eligible businesses who have not responded to initial communications to apply for a refund.

Business Support Fund

A \$500 million Business Support Fund has been established to assist small businesses that do not pay payroll tax and which operate in sectors of the economy most directly affected or severely impacted. Businesses in sectors such as retail, tourism, hospitality, accommodation and the arts were the first to be eligible for \$10,000 Business Support Fund grants. The Fund will also provide up to \$40 million for rent relief for licenced venues with an individual annual turnover of up to \$50 million, but who are not covered by the Commercial Tenancy Relief Scheme.

On 1 May 2020, as part of the second phase of the Fund, the criteria was expanded to include businesses with a wages bill less than the payroll tax threshold of \$650,000 who are participating in the Commonwealth JobKeeper program, regardless of the sector they operate in. The Business Support Fund closes on 1 June 2020.

As at 19 May 2020, 36,400 support grants had been paid, totalling \$364 million.

The grants can be used towards business costs such as rent, utilities and salaries, and activities to support business continuity planning, such as seeking financial and legal advice.

Land tax deferrals and reductions

Land tax is being deferred for taxpayers who have a non-residential property and whose total unimproved land value is less than \$1 million. Businesses who may have already paid land tax for 2020 are eligible to have any payments made to date refunded, and their full-year payment deferred up to 31 March 2021.

As at 19 May 2020, more than 60,000 commercial property owners have been offered land tax deferrals, worth \$76.7 million.

Working for Victoria Fund

Under the \$500 million Working for Victoria Fund, displaced workers are eligible to apply for different types of paid work, presenting an opportunity to contribute to Victoria's ability to manage the pandemic and support the community.

New work opportunities for displaced workers

Working for Victoria -partnered with online staffing platform Sidekicker to connect employers with workers who have lost their jobs. Using the platform, workers can provide information about their job preferences, skills and experience and receive matching available employment opportunities. Additionally, employers can register their requirements for talent and connect with candidates who meet their business needs.

As at 19 May 2020, 9,789 vacancies have been posted by 172 employers on the Sidekicker platform, with 4,310 applicants placed in jobs.

Upskilling and training opportunities

The Victorian Government has also collaborated with Victorian TAFEs to deliver targeted online short courses and TAFE courses to meet immediate job and skills needs in response to the pandemic. The TAFE network's support for this initiative has enabled the delivery and availability of:

- 16 short online training units in areas including health, cleaning and food preparation. As at 18 May 2020, 4,880 people have registered for training.
- 11 accredited free TAFE qualifications online in areas including building and construction, health care and cyber security.

Agriculture Workforce Plan

Working for Victoria includes \$50 million for the Agriculture Workforce Plan. The plan matches displaced workers to vital industries such as horticulture, dairy, meat and food production and manufacturing, as well as transport and logistics services. Support is also provided to relocate and accommodate new workers if required.

Government building rental relief

Businesses that pay rent to the Victorian Government can apply to have their 2020 rental liability waived and any rent already paid in 2020 refunded.

Liquor licence fee waiver/rebate

The liquor license fee waiver/rebate initiative ensured that all 2020 liquor licence fees were able to be refunded by the State Revenue Office. As at the beginning of May 2020, all eligible businesses (more than 20,000), have had their liquor license fee refunded totalling \$21.9 million.

To assist businesses to continue to operate within public health guidelines, the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation has streamlined the application process and is waiving fees for temporary limited licence applications to allow businesses to supply liquor for takeaway or delivery.

Freezing of fines and fees

On 5 May 2020, the Government agreed to freeze all fees and fines at current levels – including car registration, traffic infringements, court-imposed penalties and permit fees. The Fire Services Property Levy paid by all Victorian households will also be frozen at this year's collection level. The Government will also defer the planned increase in the landfill levy until 1 January 2021, which is expected to save taxpayers \$33 million across the rest of the calendar year.

On 22 May 2020, the Victorian Government also announced that it will defer the collection of rent and annual fees worth \$3.5 million until January 2021 to aid the immediate cashflow of mines, quarries and exploration companies.

Payment of outstanding government invoices

On 21 March, the Victorian Government announced that it would accelerate the payment of invoices to its suppliers and pay outstanding invoices within five days. The Government exceeded its target, with over 164,000 outstanding invoices worth \$1.9 billion between 21 March and 27 March 2020. The Victorian Government continues to accelerate the payment of all outstanding invoices.

Building Works Package

On 18 May 2020, the Victorian Government announced the \$2.7 billion Building Works package. This will create 3,700 direct jobs for construction workers, painters, plasterers, gardeners, engineers, plumbers, electricians, carpenters, maintenance workers, administrative staff and many others. Thousands more jobs will be created across supply chains including manufacturing, logistics, transport, warehousing and retail.

This includes \$1.18 billion for education infrastructure that will create space for more than 21,000 extra students and generate more than 1,600 local construction jobs. Key elements include:

- \$438.6 million to build 10 new schools and deliver a further four stages of new school projects to open in 2022
- \$130 million for the Established Areas Program to provide capacity at nine metropolitan schools
- \$114.5 million to purchase and refurbish relocatable school buildings across the state
- \$388.8 million for 57 upgrades and modernisation programs across Victoria.

The Building Works package also provides half a billion dollars for public and community housing. This investment will upgrade and repair 23,000 homes and build 168 new homes across the state.

Other sectors will also benefit:

- \$382 million for upgrades and new experiences at tourism destinations
- \$328 million for transport including resurfacing and patching roads, regional track improvements, repairs at 15 railway stations, more maintenance on trains and trams and local pier upgrades
- more than \$100 million for the upgrade of CFA and SES stations, disability accommodation, mental health and aged care facilities.

In addition, the Victorian Government established a \$180 million planning and acceleration fund to maintain momentum to continue to build economic recovery.

Commercial and residential tenancies reform

On 15 April 2020, the Victorian Government announced a Tenancy Relief Scheme to alleviate financial hardship faced by tenants and landlords as a result of the impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This scheme gives effect to the National Cabinet's mandatory code of conduct that sets out good faith leasing principles for commercial tenancies.

These emergency measures are based on good faith negotiating principles and designed to encourage parties to reach mutually agreeable outcomes in a timely manner. Tenants and landlords are strongly encouraged to sit down together to discuss alternative arrangements, including rent relief and payment plans.

The Victorian Government is supporting this with a \$500 million tenancies package, including almost \$420 million in land tax relief for eligible landlords.

Landlords who provide rent relief to tenants impacted by the pandemic may be eligible for a 25 per cent reduction on their property's 2020 land tax. This reduction is also available to landowners who are unable to secure a tenant because of the pandemic.

These landlords can also defer payment of the remainder of their 2020 land tax up to 31 March 2021. This initiative is available for eligible residential and commercial properties.

Commercial tenancies

For eligible commercial tenants and landlords, the scheme will provide the following support:

- a six-month moratorium on commercial tenancy evictions from 29 March 2020 for the non-payment of rent
- freeze on rent increases during the moratorium for commercial tenants
- a rental payment waiver or deferral that takes into account a tenant's income reduction due to coronavirus (COVID-19), to be negotiated between tenant and landlord
- a mediation service through the Victorian Small Business Commission to support fair tenancy negotiations between commercial tenants and landlords
- land tax relief to eligible commercial landlords that have provided rent relief to their tenants.

The scheme is targeted at small to medium enterprises with an annual turnover under \$50 million that have experienced a minimum 30 per cent reduction in turnover due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

Residential tenancies

Under the *COVID-19 Omnibus (Emergency Measures) Act 2020 (Vic)* (the COVID-19 Act), amendments to the *Residential Tenancies Act 1987 (Vic)* (Residential Tenancies Act) have been made to implement the moratorium on evictions agreed by the National Cabinet.

The moratorium applies to all tenure types regulated by the Residential Tenancies Act, including rooming houses, Part 4A parks and specialist disability accommodation, and will run for six months from 29 March 2020. During this time:

- evictions will be prohibited except in specified circumstances where the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal determines that eviction is reasonable and proportional (circumstances

include serious violence, wilful damage, deliberate withholding of rent where paying rent would not cause the tenant to suffer severe hardship and using the premises for illegal purposes)

- all rent increases are suspended
- tenants experiencing severe hardship will be able to give 14 days' notice to terminate a lease without paying break fees
- listings on tenancy databases will be prohibited for coronavirus-related breaches
- land tax relief to eligible residential landlords that have provided rent relief to their tenants.

The Victorian Government has also put in place safeguards to help tenants and landlords reach a revised rental agreement. Consumer Affairs Victoria is providing free and practical information and assistance, such as dispute resolution for all landlords and tenants.

To support renters in the private rental market, Victoria has provided \$80 million to establish the COVID-19 Rental Relief Grant administered by the Department of Health and Human Services. The grant is a payment of up to \$2000 available to Victorian tenants who have lost income as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) emergency and who are experiencing rental hardship, which is defined as paying more than 30 per cent of income in rent.

Support for temporary and provisional visa holders

Supporting temporary visa holders experiencing hardship is essential to maintaining Victoria's and Australia's global reputation as a place to do business, work, study and live. While temporary visas often have clauses requiring the holder to be financially independent, these unique circumstances are unprecedented in their impacts and are causing real suffering and poverty among these vulnerable groups.

Temporary and provisional visa holders in Australia, including international students, may be facing financial and social hardship through the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic as they may:

- have lost employment or become underemployed
- be ineligible for Commonwealth Government interventions and welfare mechanisms (including JobSeeker and JobKeeper)
- be unable to return home due to border closures and a lack of available or affordable flights
- be experiencing racial discrimination or made to feel unwelcome in Australia.

The Victorian Government is assisting vulnerable visa holders through ensuring that international students and temporary visa holders are eligible for the following programs:

- tenants can access the \$80 million Rental Relief Fund to help them maintain safe, secure and stable accommodation and are protected by the nation-wide moratorium on evictions
- those out of work can apply for the \$500 million Working for Victoria initiative that provides the opportunity to gain employment and help contribute to Victoria's pandemic response
- the \$59.4 million mental health and wellbeing response package to help meet surge demand for people suffering with stress, isolation and uncertainty from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The Victorian Government also announced the \$45 million International Student Emergency Relief Fund on 29 April 2020 to support up to 40,000 eligible international students who have lost wages and work due to the impacts of coronavirus (COVID-19). The fund will provide a one-off payment of up to \$1,100 to help cover necessities such as rent, food, utilities and healthcare. International students can

also access a range of confidential services at the Study Melbourne Student Centre including counselling, legal services, emergency accommodation and casework support.

Victoria provides visa nomination to high calibre skilled, business and investor migrants, including provisional visa holders. The Live in Melbourne website and phone line are being used as channels to share information about Victorian Government support for temporary and provisional skilled and business visa holders.

Support for Victoria's public sector workforce

On 6 May 2020, the Victorian Government introduced an Industrial Relations Framework for managing the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic to help support and mobilise the Victorian public sector workforce. The sector-wide mobility framework means that public sector employees with capacity can continue to receive income and be deployed into surge workforce needs in response to the pandemic.

Ongoing and fixed term employees of public sector employers who have reduced services or have closed due to coronavirus (COVID-19) are entitled to ongoing salary maintenance where they register to be deployed into a surge function and take up a role if offered. Under the framework, regular casual employees of public sector agencies most affected by the pandemic will be provided income support to bring them to their pre-pandemic income level, capped at \$1,500 per fortnight. Casuals receiving financial support must also agree to be deployed into surge function roles under the framework.

Fixed term contracts for VPS employees that were due to end between 20 April and 30 September 2020 will be extended to 30 September 2020, unless the task or function being performed ends before then. Employees whose fixed term role is extended may also be deployed into coronavirus (COVID-19) response work.

The Victorian Higher Education State Investment Fund

The *Victorian Higher Education State Investment Fund* is a \$350 million fund which will support universities with capital works, applied research and research partnerships that will boost Victoria's productivity and economy as the state recovers from the impacts of coronavirus (COVID-19), which have hit universities hard.

Works will be focused on new technology and infrastructure that enables universities to conduct new research, commercialise intellectual property and create high-value jobs. The Victorian Government will also offer universities payroll tax deferrals valued at around \$110 million, providing immediate relief for universities dealing with a shortfall in funds from the downturn of international student enrolments and other revenue loss as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19).

The Victorian Government expects universities to use this funding to retain as many staff as possible, so their institutions are well-placed to drive the revival of Victoria's economy out of the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis.

The Victorian Government has also requested the Commonwealth Government provide long term sustainability to the Higher Education sector through access to loans or grants to universities, increased funding caps for domestic students, JobKeeper payments to university staff and better support for the international student sector.

Support for training providers

The Victorian Government has implemented a \$260.8 million package to support the viability of public and community sector training providers from April to the end of June 2020. This package includes a \$191.9 million guarantee to lock in funding at expected pre-COVID-19 levels for public and community providers and an additional \$68.9 million to assist public providers manage reduced third party revenue. This package is designed to ensure that Victoria's public training system can respond and recover from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This support for the sector is complemented by a significant investment in TAFE maintenance as part of the Government's Building Works Package and through the supports made available to international students, including the \$45m international student welfare fund and access for international students to the state's rental relief program.

Support for Victoria's creative and cultural sector

The Victorian Government has committed a total of \$49 million for a survival package to provide immediate support to Victorian creative organisations and individuals. This includes \$16.8 million that was announced on 26 April 2020 to help sustain employment, develop new works and provide opportunities for creative community participation. A further \$32 million was announced on 13 May 2020, as part of the Experience Economy Survival Package, to support creative and initiatives, including funding for the Geelong Arts Centre, Museums Victoria, National Gallery of Victoria, Arts Centre Melbourne and Melbourne Recital Centre.

In addition, \$2.2 million has been allocated to Sustaining Creative Workers to offer quick response grants for Victorian-based independent creatives and micro-organisations with at least five years professional experience. On 13 May 2020, a further \$6 million was allocated for live music industry workers and to bolster the Sustaining Creative Workers initiative.

Supporting Victoria's experience economy

The Victorian Government is supporting Victorian sport, tourism and creative industries with the \$150 million Experience Economy Survival Package. This package supports sporting clubs and competitions across the state, as well as major tourist attractions, galleries and museums, and the racing industry. It includes:

- \$40 million for community sport and recreation bodies
- \$16 million to national sporting organisations
- \$5.3 million to support the State Sport Centres Trust and the Kardinia Park Stadium Trust
- \$44 million to support the state's racing industry
- \$11 million for Victoria's tourism industry and support for Victoria's creative industries.

Online support for Victorians staying at home

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is having an impact on Victorians' sense of wellbeing and connection to their communities.

On 1 May 2020, the Victorian Government established the Victoria Together hub (www.together.vic.gov.au) to showcase a range of Victorian arts, education and recreational digital experiences across web, social and other digital channels.

Victoria Together is helping Victorians to stay connected while restrictions are in place and build the government's capacity to offer digital experiences, making the hub an enduring asset for the state.

Victoria Together includes \$2.35 million in grants and partnerships to support small business and community groups to digitise their content and showcase it on the site. This will generate new experiences online for Victorians at home.

Education

Early childhood education and care

Early childhood services are continuing to operate, in line with advice from the Victorian Chief Health Officer and the AHPPC. The Victorian Government has provided up to \$45 million in additional funding to kindergarten providers and, as part of this, parents can send their children to sessional kindergarten for free in Term 2. This provides funding certainty for providers and ensures access to kindergarten, including for vulnerable children and the children of essential workers. Guidance on hygiene has also been provided to early childhood services.

Schools

Victoria moved to remote and flexible learning for the start of Term 2 to slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). Consistent with advice from the Victorian Chief Health Officer and the broader easing of restrictions, the Victorian Government is now taking a staged approach to returning to on-site schooling:

- prior to the return to on-site schooling school staff were prioritised for voluntary coronavirus testing.
- phase 1, commencing 26 May: early years students (Prep to Year 2), senior secondary students (Year 11 and 12 students) and students in specialist schools will return to on-site schooling. Monday 25 May is a pupil free day to support preparation for the transition. During this phase, vulnerable students and students whose parents cannot work from home in Years 3 to 10 can continue to attend school on-site.
- phase 2, commencing 9 June: all remaining students (Years 3 to 10) will return to on-site schooling. Remote and flexible learning will no longer be supported by the school once the year level has returned.

Schools received detailed guidance on physical distancing requirements for adults and hygiene practices to minimise the risk of transmission, including limitations on attendance at school sites and staggering school start times. The Victorian Government has also invested up to \$45 million in enhanced cleaning at government schools for all of Term 2 and Term 3. Schools have received detailed operational guidance to help make arrangements for students and staff who are unwell or medically vulnerable.

During the period of remote and flexible learning in Term 2, students who were able to learn from home were advised to stay home and learn remotely. Schools remained open for vulnerable students and students whose parents are unable to work from home. Students were supervised by on-site teachers at a ratio of 1:10 and physical distancing, hygiene and cleaning measures were in place in line with the Victorian Chief Health Officer's advice. All students received the same learning program, regardless of at-home or on-site delivery.

Support for vulnerable students

The Victorian Government has provided a range of supports so vulnerable students are still able to participate in learning. This includes:

- continuing to provide access to schools for vulnerable students prior to the return to on-site schooling. Transport arrangements for students in regional and rural areas and for students with disabilities also continued.
- providing free internet access and technology for students who need it and hard copy materials for students without 4G reception. The Victorian Government has loaned more than 57,000 laptops and tablets, including 3,700 devices with 4G internet access, and provided 22,300 SIM cards and internet dongles (for 4G internet access) to Victorian students.
- continuing Breakfast Clubs, which provide healthy meals for disadvantaged students and families, through pick up options and on-site provision for students attending schools.
- continuing key programs and services supporting students' mental health and wellbeing, including Mental Health Practitioners, Doctors in Secondary Schools and Student Support Services. The Navigator program also continues to support young people who are struggling with attendance (either remote or on-site learning) by connecting them with a case worker who can provide access to a range of support services and create a path back into education.

Social services

Children and families

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is placing immense pressure on vulnerable children and families as well as the frontline workers who support them. This includes financial challenges, physical distancing restrictions and the potential for heightened family violence. The Victorian Government has announced an additional \$77.5 million to support vulnerable children and families by bolstering the staff, resources and services available to them.

This includes \$46 million to boost the capacity of family services to support in-need families to cope with the challenges presented by coronavirus (COVID-19). Funding of \$4.3 million will expand the Homestretch program to support all young people currently in care and due to turn 18 before December 2020, to allow them to remain in their current placement or support them to transition to independent living. Funding of over \$15 million will also provide additional emergency care placements, increased health surveillance and cleaning, and mobile support teams for residential care services to prevent the spread of coronavirus and proactively respond to the needs of young people.

The Government has also provided \$11 million in additional supports to kinship and foster carers due to increased pressures associated with coronavirus (COVID-19). This will provide carers with an additional one-off \$600 payment per child in their care, access to a flexible funding pool for additional supports for those most in need, increased access to respite care and dedicated phone support via a carers' hotline.

These supports will help to preserve existing placements and promote better outcomes for children and their families.

Housing

The Victorian Government is committed to supporting the health, safety and wellbeing of public housing tenants during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Additional sanitisation services have been introduced at all high-rise towers, including regular cleaning of touchpoints in common areas such as door handles and lift buttons. Extra hand sanitiser dispensers have been placed in foyers and refilled daily.

The Government is working to ensure that public housing services continue to be delivered in a manner that is safe for tenants, staff and contractors during the pandemic. As a result, engagement is being delivered via telephone, email and digital online services. As part of this, the Keeping in Touch program, a weekly phone check-in for tenants who register, has been expanded during the pandemic to include all single public housing tenants 75 years and over.

The Government is also working to ensure public housing tenants can maintain their housing during the crisis. In line with broader reforms to protect tenants, the Victorian Government is ensuring public housing tenants will not be evicted due to financial hardship because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Evictions have been temporarily suspended except for anti-social behaviour (dangerous behaviour, illegal use of property, urgent compliance matters, illegal occupants) or other behaviour that places tenants and other people at risk.

The Victorian Government is also ensuring that tenants eligible for a reduction of their rent will have their rent reviewed as a priority. This will ensure tenants pay no more than 25 per cent of their household income as rent.

Homelessness

People who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness are at greater risk of contracting coronavirus (COVID-19) and have compromised ability to recover. On 18 March 2020, the Victorian Government announced almost \$6 million in funding to protect Victorians at risk of or experiencing homelessness because of coronavirus (COVID-19), and to help manage any outbreaks and community transmission.

The Victorian Government provided a further \$8.8 million for four pop-up COVID-19 Isolation and Recovery Facilities that commenced operation on 27 April 2020. These facilities will provide health care and 24-hour supported accommodation facilities in inner Melbourne for more than 200 rough sleepers affected by coronavirus (COVID-19) over the next six months. During their stay, clients will work with housing support workers to ensure exit pathways, including applications for community and public housing and assistance to access a range of other supports. Each client's length of stay will be in line with current health advice, ensuring clients are no longer infectious and that symptoms of the virus have resolved. This will be approximately two weeks, or longer dependent upon individual recovery times.

To overcome barriers to accessing mainstream health services and ensure timely diagnosis, treatment and isolation, St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne is leading intake and referral processes, clinical care in all Isolation and Recovery Facilities, access to telehealth services, and the provision of a Mobile Fever Clinic. Clients requiring acute nursing or medical care, including management of alcohol and other drug withdrawal are referred to appropriate mainstream health services and facilities for assessment and treatment.

Disability

The Victorian Government recognises that people with disability may be uniquely affected by coronavirus (COVID-19) and is working closely with the Victorian Disability Advisory Council to ensure the response is effective for people with disability.

The Victorian Government has provided an additional \$17 million to fund a range of initiatives to support Victorians with disability during the pandemic. This includes a \$2.2 million boost for advocacy organisations to ensure people with disability remain adequately supported.

Disability liaison officers are being established in health assessment centres to support people with disability to access coronavirus (COVID-19) services and to link people to other supports they need. Specialist roles to support the needs of people with disability in the forensic disability, youth justice and adult prison systems are also being established. The Department of Health and Human Services' Intensive Support Team is also being expanded to provide additional support to Victorians struggling to access and navigate the NDIS, particularly people with complex needs.

In recognition of the vital role that carers play in our community, an additional 11,000 hours of respite care for about 600 carers is being made available for carers who become ill and need to self-isolate. The Office of the Public Advocate will also receive almost \$1 million to ensure people under guardianship do not experience long wait-times for services and to provide new technology for our Community Visitors program.

The Victorian Government is also investing in the disability sector through additional funding to support business continuity for psychosocial disability providers and small not-for-profit services. It is also reducing barriers for the disability workforce by providing 20,000 free police and working with children checks.

The Victorian Government has released specific guidance to support people with disability and their carers during home isolation and continues to update the *COVID-19 Plan for the Disability Services Sector* to provide detailed guidance so that supports for people with disability can be maintained throughout the pandemic.

Emergency relief needs

Emergency Management Victoria and the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services have responsibility for coordination of relief at state and regional levels respectively and local governments have responsibility at a local level. A State Emergency Relief Coordinator has been appointed to coordinate emergency relief planning and activities.

Wherever possible, emergency relief is being delivered 'at place' across all tiers (local, regional and state) to support people to stay at home and reduce the risk to all Victorians. To support local relief through an 'at place' approach, there are a range of programs managed and delivered at state level and supported at a local level.

These include:

- emergency relief packages of food and essential personal items for vulnerable Victorians who are in mandatory self-isolation. The program is aimed at people in Victoria who need to self-quarantine due to coronavirus (COVID-19) and do not have enough food, or means of accessing food, to feed

themselves or their families. Each emergency food relief package is designed to provide basic food essentials and personal care items for a family of four for two weeks.

- telephone outreach to provide psychosocial support and connection to people required to self-isolate, to reduce the psychological impact. The need for telephone outreach is identified through the emergency food relief program.
- emergency accommodation for vulnerable persons/households, which includes accommodation and related services for those who are a public health risk.

Responsibility for the supply and distribution of food relief in Victoria is one that is shared by local, state and federal governments, charities, businesses and community organisations. The Victorian Government is working with these partners to ensure the Victorian food relief system can meet the needs of people experiencing vulnerability across Victoria during the pandemic.

Support to Victoria's Aboriginal communities

Aboriginal communities are likely to be disproportionately impacted by the social, economic, cultural and health implications of the coronavirus (COVID-19)

The Victorian Government recognises the importance of ensuring that Aboriginal Victorians have access to culturally safe health care and other essential services during this time. We remain committed to self-determination in developing Aboriginal-specific coronavirus (COVID-19) responses and acknowledge the critically important role of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations during the pandemic. The Victorian Government is providing a range of Aboriginal-specific coronavirus (COVID-19) responses, including:

- establishing a COVID-19 Aboriginal Community Taskforce, comprising government and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation representatives, to drive a comprehensive, coordinated and culturally safe response to coronavirus impacts on Aboriginal Victorians
- mobilising the Aboriginal Victorian Public Service workforce to establish local Aboriginal COVID-19 Response Networks and coordinate whole-of-government action
- supporting Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to receive the necessary personal protective equipment through the Victorian Government's Personal Protective Equipment Prioritisation Framework
- working with Aboriginal organisations and trusted community voices to roll out culturally appropriate, Aboriginal-specific coronavirus (COVID-19) communications on social and traditional media
- working with the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation and Health Purchasing Victoria to inform the State's Emergency Food Security Strategy and ensure that Aboriginal Victorians have access to food during this time
- providing urgent crisis accommodation to ensure that Aboriginal people who are affected by coronavirus (COVID-19) do not infect their household members, including Aboriginal people over 50 years old, who are particularly vulnerable
- providing targeted funding to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations as part of a broader \$40.2 million funding package from the Victorian Government to support short-term accommodation for victim survivors who cannot self-isolate safely at home

- ensuring that all Aboriginal Victorian school students are supported to continue their learning. This includes loaning laptops and tablets to students who do not have access to digital technologies and working with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to provide broader support to Aboriginal families
- providing accurate and accessible information and support to the Lake Tyers and Framlingham Aboriginal communities
- prioritising the continuation of Victoria's Treaty process by supporting the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria to continue working using digital technologies.

Support to multicultural and faith-based communities

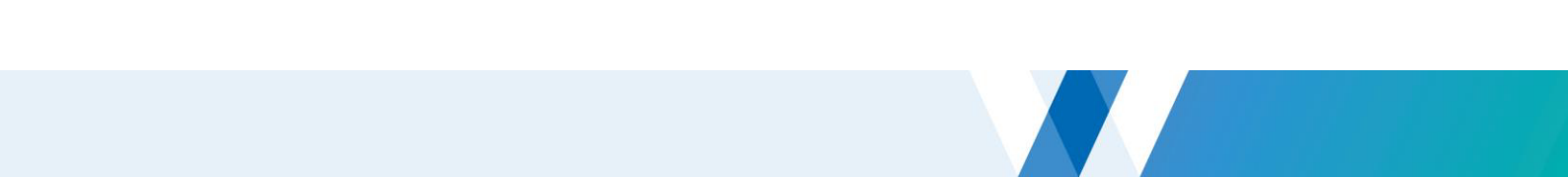
Multicultural communities are facing disproportionate and unique challenges as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19). Government health restrictions mean that many in our multicultural community cannot come together to embrace and celebrate cultural and religious festivities. Many people are experiencing social isolation and dislocation from their peers and communities, their cultures and faiths.

Some confront additional challenges in accessing services, because they are ineligible for Commonwealth Government income support programs or because they are experiencing language or other barriers to access.

The Victorian Government has announced \$11.3 million in funding over two years for a package of targeted supports to ensure that community organisations and services are equipped to respond to the urgent needs of multicultural and faith communities in Victoria. This includes:

- almost \$2 million to support community wellbeing and connection and deliver practical supports through existing networks and community organisations by providing flexible funding to build online engagement and support their communities remotely
- nearly \$5 million to deliver initiatives to support at-risk families, promote youth wellbeing and address youth disengagement. This includes digitising outreach to young people, leadership programs for young leaders, support for families and community engagement and wellbeing initiatives for at-risk young people
- \$2.2 million to support asylum seekers and refugees facing financial hardship through basic needs assistance packages that provide practical support to buy food, clothing and other essential items
- \$1.1 million to support multicultural and ethno-specific organisations to deliver culturally appropriate family violence prevention and early intervention by proactively engaging with women and families in isolation
- \$1 million to boost translated messaging across government departments, so Victorians who speak languages other than English can better navigate their way through the pandemic.

In addition, the Victorian Government is providing \$500,000 through a multicultural media grants program to support multicultural and multilingual media outlets to purchase or upgrade their equipment. This support is in recognition of the critical role multicultural media organisations are playing in keeping multicultural communities informed, connected and supported in these challenging times.



Delivering this support now will ensure that on the other side of this pandemic, Victoria's vibrant multicultural sector is able to remain strong, and that our communities will be supported to continue their valuable contribution to society and to the economy.

Family violence response

Prevention of and response to family violence is a critical priority in the Victorian Government's management of coronavirus (COVID-19). All family violence, sexual assault and Orange Door services remain available to support people experiencing or at risk of family violence.

The prevalence and severity of family violence is expected to increase during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic with a surge in demand expected once physical restrictions are lifted. It is also likely more people will perpetrate family violence given the increase in exacerbating factors such as social isolation, alcohol abuse and financial stress.

To support victim survivors of family violence to escape and recover during the pandemic, the Victorian Government has invested \$40.2 million to boost the availability of crisis accommodation and specialist services for people suffering or at risk of family violence. This includes:

- \$20.2 million to build the capacity of family violence and sexual assault services, including Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, to meet expected increased demand and support for the sector to modify their operations to work remotely. It includes increased funding for safesteps to continue its 24/7 crisis response
- \$20 million for short-term accommodation for family violence victim survivors who do not feel safe isolating or recovering from coronavirus (COVID-19) at home.

\$3 million has been invested for 12 women's health services across the state to continue work in delivering prevention of family violence training, advice and support to organisations in their local areas.

Respect Victoria's new 'Respect Each Other: Call It Out (COVID-19)' campaign will run across May and June 2020 to inform bystanders about what can be done to address family violence and to encourage impacted people to seek help.

In the justice system, courts continue to prioritise family violence matters including applications for intervention orders. Changes include pilots of 'e-court trials' and remotely delivering services such as Court Mandated Counselling Order Programs and providing online access to Family Violence Intervention Order application forms. The COVID-19 Act also extended the time before which interim extensions of Family Violence Intervention Orders and Personal Safety Intervention Orders lapse, from 28 days to three months, to ensure the person in need of the order remains protected.

Victoria Police is delivering Operation Ribbon, where specialist detectives from Family Violence Investigation Units across the state actively check on those who have been assessed as a high risk of being the victim of further family violence. Officers are also conducting compliance checks to ensure perpetrators understand their obligations. As of 8 May 2020, the operation has already seen police conduct 2,433 checks, including 748 compliance checks on high-risk perpetrators.

The work of Victoria Police, courts and other parts of government will continue to focus on interventions to monitor perpetrators and hold them to account.

Justice response

Courts

The Victorian Government's COVID-19 Omnibus (Emergency Measures) Act (the COVID-19 Act) made procedural and process changes to enable the courts and wider legal system to continue to deliver vital justice services while complying with coronavirus (COVID-19) related restrictions affecting in-person processes including jury empanelment.

Under the Act, judge-only trials will be permitted where the defendant has agreed and the prosecution has been consulted, and courts have gained greater flexibility to change their processes to reduce person-to-person interaction, including through electronic filing and execution of affidavits and increased use of audio-video links, telephone and other technology to conduct proceedings.

The Act also includes a temporary power for the Attorney-General to make further procedural changes by regulation, so that justice processes can be quickly adapted to changing public health requirements.

The Victorian Government has also worked to ensure vulnerable and at-risk Victorians will continue to have access to justice through a \$17.5 million package of supports for legal assistance services in response to coronavirus (COVID-19). The funding is being provided to Victoria Legal Aid and every Community Legal Centre and Aboriginal legal service in the state – supporting Victorians with a range of issues including family violence related matters, employment rights, debt and consumer credit, and tenancy and housing matters.

In harmony with these reforms initiated by the Victorian Government, Victorian courts and tribunals have made adjustments at jurisdictional, list and program levels which reflect the types of matters and litigants they deal with. These responses seek to promote physical distancing by minimising the number of people in and around court and tribunal facilities.

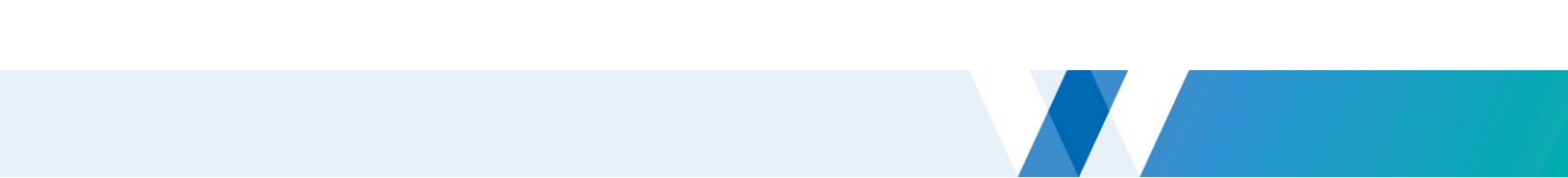
This includes the wide scale adoption of remote hearing, with matters proceeding via audio-visual link or phone where possible. Some matters are also being heard 'on the papers', supported by written submissions from the parties involved. A variety of technology platforms are being used, allowing contact between the courts, correctional facilities, and the personal devices of legal professionals. Where in-person attendance is required, hearings are conducted to time limits and staggered, to minimise the chance of parties encountering one another in and around the facilities.

Outside the courtroom, registries and other court-related services are working and communicating electronically and limiting personal contact with the general public.

Some processes, such as the hearing of matters in the presence of elders and respected persons in the Koori Court or the pooling of juries prior to empanelment, pose too great a risk in the current environment.

Some jurisdictions, such as the County Court, have put in place triage conferences and are offering to bring forward matters such as pleas and sentence appeals that are well placed for determination in the current environment.

Urgent matters including family violence, bail, warrants, tenancy and guardianship cases, continue to be prioritised.



A \$5.2 million Victorian Government investment has also been made to enable the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal to upgrade its systems, including information technology hardware and the digitisation and scanning of paper files, to work remotely on planning matters in response to coronavirus restrictions. This will ensure that that billions of dollars' worth of projects can continue.

Youth Justice

The COVID-19 Act includes temporary amendments relevant to Youth Justice including:

- subject to specific safeguards, the ability to isolate young people in custody for the purpose of detecting, preventing or mitigating the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) and other infectious disease, including on a preventative basis
- allowing courts to order oral, rather than written, pre-sentence reports, to facilitate the efficient administration of justice for young people during the current pandemic
- more flexibility to the composition of the Youth Parole Board, supporting the ongoing operation of the board and efficient parole decision making during the current pandemic
- several procedural amendments to allow more flexible operations in courts and legal proceedings during the pandemic, consistent with public health advice regarding physical distancing.

Youth Justice custodial facilities remain fully operational and are continuing to meet children's and young people's developmental needs. Measures have been put in place to prevent the introduction and/or spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) including:

- changing face-to-face visits from family members to virtual visits, and replacing contact with maintaining contact with remote technology
- temperature checking and screening of young people on admission for coronavirus (COVID-19) illness or risk and staff, contractors, and essential visitors at entry
- physical distancing practices and enhanced cleaning
- responding in line with the custodial management plan should a person be identified as presenting a coronavirus (COVID-19) risk.

Primary health and mental health services have continued to operate including the Custodial Youth Forensic Mental Health Service which is delivered by a multidisciplinary team.

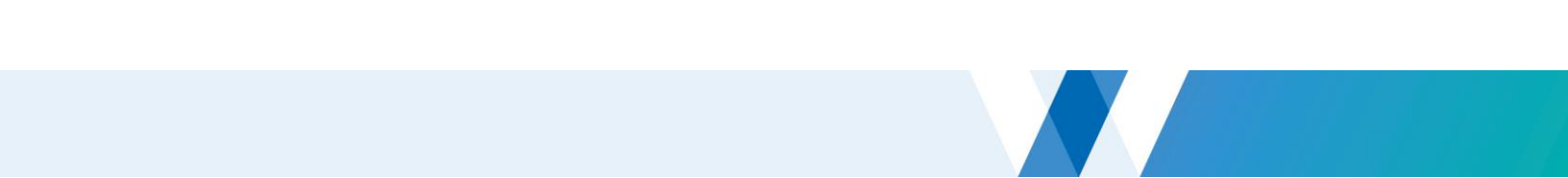
Arrangements have also been made to ensure Aboriginal children and young people remain connected to their families, community and culture while in custody:

- all young people have been given additional phone calls and can receive visits from family and community members facilitated by technology
- Aboriginal children and young people have been provided with resources to ensure their cultural connection and feeling of safety.

Aboriginal Liaison Officers and the Victorian Aboriginal Childcare Agency Youth Through-Care Project are continuing to support Aboriginal young people. Youth Justice is also working with the Koorie Youth Council to develop materials to provide information in an Aboriginal youth friendly cultural context.

Community-based supervision is being conducted remotely in most cases. In-person meetings with children or young people occur when needed.

Youth Justice and the Department of Education and Training (DET) are partnering to support the educational needs of young people while observing health advice. Parkville College has developed a



timetable that aims to provide each young person with up to five hours face-to-face time with a teacher, five days per week. Where young people are supervised in the community, Youth Justice is working with DET to provide the necessary equipment for remote learning.

Youth Justice has improved its video-link and technology to support remote court appearances for young people in custody and on community-based orders. Youth Justice court advice staff are also providing advice to courts remotely, where practicable. The Victorian Children's Court Youth Diversion service is also being supported so that young people's access to court-based diversion and associated supports are maintained.

Corrections

The COVID-19 Act formalises the measures the Victorian Government has developed to help prevent an outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) in custodial facilities, based on current medical advice. This provides a clear legal framework for health and safety measures in Victorian prisons to prevent, detect and mitigate the risk posed by coronavirus (COVID-19).

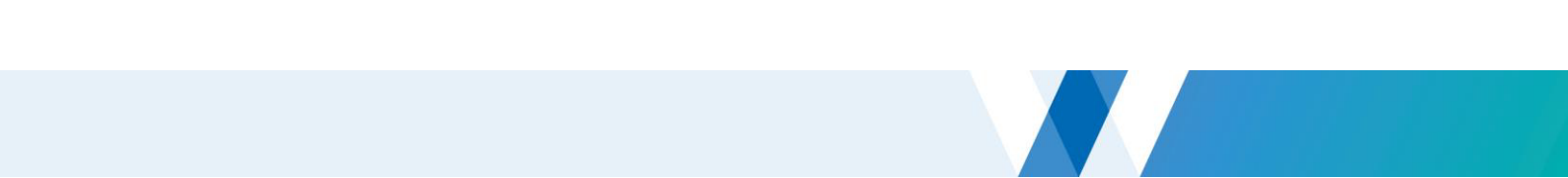
The COVID-19 Act enables restrictions on prison visits and alternative communication arrangements, mandatory protective quarantine of new prisoners, protective isolation of prisoners where necessary and powers to treat prisoners.

The COVID-19 Act also amends the *Sentencing Act 1991* (Vic) to allow magistrates to impose electronic monitoring of Community Correction Orders (CCOs) to enhance supervision of higher risk offenders on these orders.

Within custodial operations, protective measures include:

- **screening** - all prisoners entering or transferred between custodial facilities are having their temperature taken and are being asked questions to screen for coronavirus (COVID-19) risk. All staff and essential visitors are asked screening questions and have their temperature checked prior to entry. Staff have been advised not to come to work if they are unwell or pose a coronavirus (COVID-19) risk for any other reason, such as close contact with a confirmed case
- **quarantine** - All incoming prisoners are quarantined for 14 days on entry to the prison system. Separately, any prisoner with symptoms is referred to their location's medical team
- **isolation** - any prisoner with suspected coronavirus (COVID-19) is referred to their location's medical team for review and testing and is isolated pending test results. Isolation procedures have been established and will be enacted if a confirmed case is identified. Prisoners in protective quarantine have access to cultural support and religious counsel, and health and mental health care
- **hygiene** - health and custodial staff are encouraged to ensure they practice physical distancing where possible, and have access to personal protective equipment, hand washing/sanitising options, and cleaning products and equipment.

In accordance with a decision of National Cabinet on 20 March 2020, all personal visits to adult prisons were suspended as of 21 March 2020, until further notice. Corrections Victoria has increased prisoners' access to personal video visits and phone calls.



Prisoners have access to on-site medical services. The department is committed to the delivery of community-equivalent physical and mental healthcare within the prison system, and providers are working to ensure continuity of services. This includes:

- increased use of telehealth to facilitate consultations with prisoners
- access to cultural support and religious counsel, in-cell telephone calls, video-based visits, books, televisions, education material, printed exercise routines and televisions
- wellbeing and distress tolerance counselling and support available seven days per week.

Work is also underway to enhance medical treatment capacity within the prison system in the event of an outbreak to provide more sub-acute beds within a number of facilities.

Health and other support services continue to operate across prisons including by remote delivery where possible.

Additional support is being provided to prisoners being released into the community. Corrections Victoria is providing, where required, appropriate and safe transportation to take prisoners to their accommodation on the day of release, and accommodation for prisoners who are medically required to self-isolate and lack other accommodation options.

Community Correctional Services continues to supervise offenders undertaking community-based orders, including supervision orders, parole orders and community corrections orders. The COVID-19 Act gives the Magistrates' Court the power to impose electronic monitoring of adult offenders on CCOs as an additional tool to increase supervision of offenders in the community. To mitigate the risk of coronavirus (COVID 19) transmission, this is transitioning to remote service delivery and supervising offenders using technology such as video platforms where appropriate. Alternative methods of contacting offenders who do not have access to any form of phone or technology are being implemented. Alternative options are also being implemented for group program delivery and expansion of home-based community work options.

Planning the next phase of coronavirus (COVID-19) response

Easing restrictions

On 11 May 2020, the Victorian Government announced the first stage of easing restrictions. This announcement followed National Cabinet's agreement to a three-step plan to gradually remove baseline restrictions, with states and territories to make decisions on eased restrictions based on their individual circumstances and local conditions.

From 11.59pm on 12 May 2020, Victorians can leave home to visit family and friends. The eased restrictions allow:

- outdoor gatherings of up to 10 people
- up to five visitors to a home
- 10 guests, plus the couple and the celebrant, at weddings
- 20 people at an indoor funeral or 30 people at an outdoor funeral (in addition to the minimum number of people required to conduct the funeral)
- religious gatherings and ceremonies with up to 10 people (in addition to the minimum number of people required to perform the ceremony).

These new restrictions will be in place until 11.59pm on 31 May 2020, which is for the duration of the current extension of the State of Emergency declaration (see: *State of Emergency under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic)*). In the lead up to this deadline, the Victorian Government will continue to review the situation and case numbers to inform future decisions about eased restrictions.

On 17 May 2020, the Victorian Government announced that the low numbers of community transmission and high rates of testing provide confidence to begin planning the phased re-opening of cafes, restaurants, pubs and other hospitality businesses from 1 June 2020.

The further easing of restrictions will be dependent on continued high testing and low rates of community transmission. From 1 June 2020, it is the aim that cafes, restaurants and pubs will be able to reopen their doors to serve meals to up to 20 patrons at a time per enclosed space. This could increase to 50 patrons by 22 June 2020 and 100 patrons by the second half of July 2020, in line with the advice of the Chief Health Officer. A number of precautions will be put in place to guide these changes:

- all venues will need to abide by existing physical distancing requirements of one person per four square metres. Tables will also need to be spaced at least 1.5 metres apart
- venues will be required to take the contact details of every customer to assist in rapid contact tracing
- other safety measures such as cleaning, staff health screening and temperature checks will be implemented.

On 24 May 2020, the Premier announced that from 11.59pm 31 May 2020, further restrictions would be eased allowing for:

- outdoor gathering of 20 people and 20 people in a home
- overnight stays in residents and accommodation

- up to 20 people to attend weddings (plus celebrant and couple) and up to 50 people to attend a funeral, in addition to those required to conduct the ceremony
- up to 20 people to attend other religious ceremonies, in addition to those required to perform the services
- libraries, youth centres and other community facilities to open with no more than 20 people in a single area, plus those needed to operate the space
- entertainment and cultural venues like galleries, museums, drive-in cinemas and historic sites will be able to open their doors, alongside zoos and outdoor amusement parks to open with a limit of 20 patrons per space
- swimming pools to open with limits of 20 people and additional safety requirements in place
- community sporting activities, with up to 20 people in undivided spaces, provided the sport is outdoors, non-competition, non-contact, and people are able to play 1.5 metres apart
- beauty and personal care services like nail salons, spas, tattoo parlours to open with up to 20 customers per space – with customer contact details required to be kept.

If community transmission rates continue to remain low and testing rates continue to remain high, further restrictions are expected to be eased from 22 June 2020.

Schools

The Victorian Government is taking a staged return to on-site schooling. Phase 1 will commence on 26 May 2020 and Phase 2 will commence on 9 June 2020. This approach will give the Victorian Government and the Victorian Chief Health Officer time to monitor and evaluate the effects that the return to school has on the increased movement of people and transmission within the community.

Continuing interjurisdictional cooperation in developing the next phases of the response

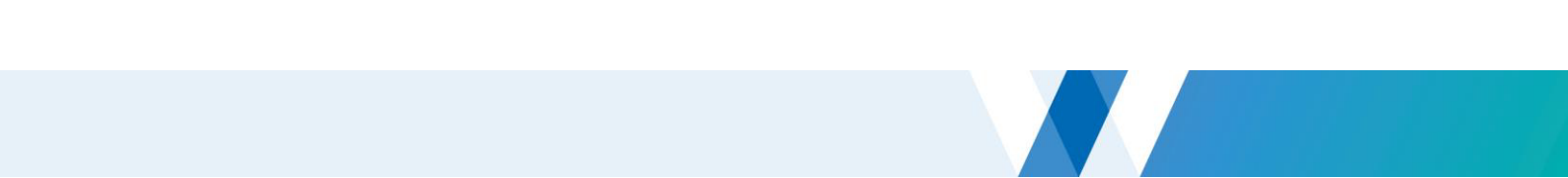
The Victorian Government supports developing coordinated approaches to managing coronavirus (COVID-19) in Australia and will continue working collaboratively to achieve this. Due to the different conditions, risks and legislative arrangements across jurisdictions, consistency is not always possible.

The National Cabinet has enabled first ministers to collectively manage the health emergency. In moving into the next phase, there will be increased focus on economic and social recovery.

For the National Cabinet to continue to operate effectively, jurisdictional sovereignty will need to continue to be respected. Public communications should continue to emphasise that different states and territories will make decisions based on local conditions.

Considerations in longer term recovery planning

As the urgency of responding to the health emergency subsides, there will likely be much public debate on how to support long-term recovery. A clear evidence-based framework is needed to support National Cabinet decision-making. This should include timely and meaningful engagement with states and territories on any reform initiatives that may be needed for Australia to recover.



The phased easing of restrictions is the first component of this road to recovery but to ensure that Australian society can recover to its fullest extent possible, it will be important that the Commonwealth and the states and territories continue to develop mutually reinforcing policies. The federation works best when it is focused on common objectives, respecting the roles, responsibilities and expertise of the different levels of Government.

The National Cabinet will have a role to play in establishing the parameters for encouraging continued interjurisdictional cooperation in policy making and service delivery necessary to deliver a comprehensive recovery.

Appendix 1: Directions issued

Current directions, as at 13 May 2020

In summary, as at 13 May 2020, six directions remain in force until 31 May 2020, unless revoked sooner. These directions are:

1. *Restricted Activity Directions (No 7)*, effective from 11.59pm on 12 May 2020
2. *Direction and Detention Notice*, as issued from 11 May 2020
3. *Care Facilities Directions (No 3)*, effective 11 May 2020
4. *Hospital Visitor Directions (No 3)*, effective 11 May 2020
5. *Diagnosed Persons and Close Contacts Directions*, effective 11 May 2020
6. *Stay at Home Directions (No 6)*, effective from 11.59pm on 12 May 2020.

Directions on gatherings

The following directions have been made restricting, then prohibiting, gatherings:

- *Mass Gatherings Directions* (made 18 March 2020, revoked 22 March 2020)
- *Mass Gatherings Directions (No 2)* (made 21 March 2020, revoked 25 March 2020)
- *Prohibited Gatherings Directions* (made 25 March, revoked 30 March 2020).

These directions were replaced with the Stay at Home Directions (below), which also restrict gatherings.

Directions on international travel into Victoria

On 11 May 2020, a *Direction and Detention Notice* was authorised, which, upon being given to an individual arriving from overseas into Victoria, requires them to be quarantined at a specified hotel for 14 days. The notice was preceded by the:

- *Airport Arrivals Direction* (made 18 March 2020, revoked on 28 March 2020)
- *Cruise Ship Docking Direction* (made 19 March 2020, revoked 28 March 2020)
- *Revocation of Airport Arrivals Direction and Cruise Ship Docking Direction* (made 28 March 2020)
- first version of the *Direction and Detention Notice* which was issued to individuals arriving from overseas into Victoria from midnight 28 March 2020 to midnight 13 April 2020
- second version of the *Direction and Detention Notice* which was issued to individuals arriving from overseas into Victoria from midnight 13 April 2020 to midnight 11 May 2020.

Directions on residential care facilities

On 11 May 2020, the *Care Facilities Directions (No 3)* were made, which restrict the entry to ‘care facilities’ (including residential aged care facilities, supported residential services and other facilities) to residents, workers, and certain visitors, until 31 May 2020. These directions were preceded by the:

- *Aged Care Facilities Directions* (made 21 March 2020, revoked 7 April 2020)
- *Care Facilities Directions* (made 7 April 2020, revoked 13 April 2020)
- *Care Facilities Directions (No 2)* (made 13 April 2020, revoked 11 May 2020).

Directions on hospital visits

On 11 May 2020, *Hospital Visitor Directions (No 3)*, were made which prohibit non-essential visits to hospitals, and only permit patients, workers and visitors to enter (until 31 May 2020). These directions were preceded by the:

- *Hospital Visitor Directions* (made 23 March 2020, revoked 13 April 2020)
- *Hospital Visitor Directions (No 2)* (made 13 April 2020, revoked 11 May 2020).

Directions on non-essential businesses and activities

On 11 May 2020, the *Restricted Activities Directions (No 7)* were made, which are effective from 11.59pm on 12 May 2020. These directions restrict the operations of businesses and undertakings, including entertainment and recreational facilities and places of worship. These directions also ease previous restrictions by permitting limited gatherings for religious, sporting and certain other purposes. These directions were preceded by the:

- *Non-Essential Business Closure Direction* (made 23 March 2020, revoked 25 March 2020)
- *Non-Essential Activity Directions* (made 25 March 2020, revoked 26 March 2020)
- *Non-Essential Activity Directions (No 2)* (made 26 March 2020, revoked 30 March 2020)
- *Restricted Activity Directions* (made 30 March 2020, revoked 7 April 2020)
- *Restricted Activity Directions (No 2)* (made 7 April 2020, revoked 13 April 2020)
- *Restricted Activity Directions (No 3)* (made 13 April 2020, revoked 17 April 2020)
- *Restricted Activities Directions (No 4)* (made 17 April 2020, revoked 24 April 2020)
- *Restricted Activities Directions (No 5)* (made 24 April 2020, revoked 11 May 2020)
- *Restricted Activities Directions (No 6)* (made 11 May 2020, revoked 12 May 2020).

Directions on self-isolation

On 11 May 2020, the *Diagnosed Persons and Close Contacts Directions* were made, which requires persons diagnosed with coronavirus (COVID-19) to self-isolate, following certain conditions. The directions also require persons residing with a diagnosed person, as well as their close contacts, to self-quarantine. These directions were preceded by the:

- *Isolation (Diagnosis) Direction* (made 25 March 2020, revoked 13 April 2020)
- *Isolation (Diagnosis) Direction (No 2)* (made 13 April 2020, revoked 11 May 2020).

Stay at home directions

On 11 May 2020, the *Stay at Home Directions (No 6)* were made, which are effective from 11.59pm on 12 May 2020. The directions clarify that everyone in Victoria is required to limit their interactions with others. The directions restrict the circumstances in which people may leave the premises where they ordinarily reside, and place restrictions on gatherings. These directions also ease previous restrictions by allowing people to gather in certain numbers and leave their home for wellbeing purposes, including recreation and exercise. These directions were preceded by the:

- *Stay at Home Directions* (made 30 March 2020, revoked 2 April 2020)
- *Stay at Home Directions (No 2)* (made 2 April 2020, revoked 7 April 2020)
- *Stay at Home Directions (No 3)* (made 7 April 2020, revoked 13 April 2020)
- *Stay at Home Directions (No 4)* (made 13 April 2020, revoked 11 May 2020)
- *Stay at Home Directions (No 5)* (made 11 May 2020, revoked 12 May 2020).