

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Topic: Correspondence between the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Victorian government

Senator: Paterson

Question reference number: 0197

Type of question: Written, 13 August 2020

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 28 August 2020

Number of pages: 4

Question:

Could the department provide the committee with copies of any correspondence between PM&C and the Victorian government regarding Australian Defence Force assistance to the Victorian government during the coronavirus pandemic?

Answer:

The scope of this request would require the Department to commit considerable resources to search and review materials for relevance and would involve an unreasonable diversion of resources.

To assist the Committee, attached are two documents, responsive to the question, that were also produced by the Commonwealth on 26 August 2020 to the Victorian Board of Inquiry into the COVID-19 Hotel Quarantine Program as part of the Commonwealth's voluntary submission to that inquiry. That submission was produced to this Committee by the Department of Defence on 14 September 2020 in response to a question on notice asked by Senator Paterson (question reference number 16). Redactions have been applied to some telephone contact details and some names of officials.

- Copy of email exchange dated 8 April 2020 between the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Mr Phil Gaetjens, and the Secretary of the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet, Mr Chris Eccles AO ([Attachment 1](#)).
- Copy of email dated 24 June 2020 from Mr Eccles to Mr Gaetjens ([Attachment 2](#)).

Attachment 1

Gaetjens, Phil

From: Chris Eccles (DPC) @dpc.vic.gov.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 8 April 2020 4:02 PM
To: Gaetjens, Phil
Subject: OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE: RE: Assistance re hotel stay security [SEC-OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

Thanks Phil
Chris Eccles AO
Secretary
Department of Premier and Cabinet, Victoria
Ph:

OFFICIALSENSITIVE

From: Gaetjens, Phil
Sent: Wednesday, 8 April
2020 11:05 AM To: Chris
Eccles DPO
cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Assistance re hotel stay security [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]
OFFICIAL:Sensitive

Chris

On the question of assistance with security, I am advised the only deal with NSW was in-kind provision of ADF personnel.

I am sure the Commonwealth would be willing to assist Victoria in a similar way if you wanted to reconsider your operating model.

Philip Gaetjens

Secretary

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

p.

e

@pmc.gov.au w. www.pmc.gov.au

One National Circuit BARTON ACT 2600 PO Box 6500 CANBERRA ACT 2600

Executive Assistant – [REDACTED]

p.

e.

[REDACTED] m. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] @pmc.gov.au



The Department acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respect to their Cultures, Country and Elders both past and present.

Attachment 2

From: Chris Eccles (DPC) [@dpc.vic.gov.au](mailto:chris.eccles@dpc.vic.gov.au)>
Sent: Wednesday, 24 June 2020 8:15 AM
To: Gaetjens, Phil [@pmc.gov.au](mailto:phil.gaetjens@pmc.gov.au)>
Subject: OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE: ADF support

Phil

As per my recent text, the Premier and Prime Minister discussed last night the support that might be provided by the ADF in relation to the current outbreaks in Victoria.

The categories of requested support follow.

Operational coordination and planning support

The State Control Centre and other emergency management arrangements are fully engaged in coordination, operations and logistics, including through whole of government coordination and engagement with other agencies such as the ADF. The mission will involve targeted deployment of DHHS operational capabilities in each region, VicPol capacity (in particular to support enforcement and compliance at hotel quarantine locations and elsewhere) and deployment of ADF personnel and capability in support and logistics roles, and to transport pathology samples interstate for testing if required.

The State Control Centre has remained operational for the duration of the COVID-19 response. Resourcing of the SCC is scalable and will be reviewed by the State Control Team in line with this mission.

EMV have established the combined agency operations group (CAOG). This group combines relevant state agencies and the ADF to provide planning and technical expertise that can assist in a number of areas including planning, logistics and supply chain solutions, and generally assisting at times when normal agency arrangements are becoming overwhelmed. The CAOG forms a part of the overall SCC operating model supporting the State Controller Health.

Staff request: 10-12 planners/logisticians and 4 intelligence officers. This will add to the 9 planners currently operating from the State Control Centre

Medical and co-ordination staff to support drive through testing

In addition to neighbourhood and door to door testing in hotspot suburbs it is essential to maintain a baseline testing level to effectively monitor the spread of the virus across the state.

A baseline target of 10,000 test a day will be set to ensure anyone with mild symptoms can get tested across the state. This is on top of testing of testing associated with any outbreaks, sensitive sights and close contacts of confirmed cases.

Existing retail and drive through sites will be maintained. An additional ten drive through testing sites will be stood up this week. This will include large drive through sites to support the effort, including the showgrounds, race courses and the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre. ADF coordination and medical support for these testing sites is requested.

Staff request: 5 planners/logisticians and 200 medical staff

Security support services for hotel operations

Similar to support provided in NSW, ADF security support for passengers entering and exiting hotel quarantine is sought.

Personnel request: between 50-100 personnel

Our contact person is [REDACTED] health commander, who can be contacted at [REDACTED]@dhhs.vic.gov.au and on [REDACTED].

I'm also happy to discuss.

Thanks

Chris

Chris Eccles AO
Secretary
Department of Premier and Cabinet, Victoria

Ph:

OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE

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- Copy of email chain sent by Lieutenant General John Frewen DSC AM to the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Mr Phil Gaetjens, on 25 June 2020, with subject of 'Victorian Request for Assistance – RFA013, RFA014 & RFA015' – [Attachment 1](#).
- Copy of RFA015 – [Attachment 2](#).

Attachment 1

From: Frewen, John LTGEN
To: [Gaetiens, Phil](#)
Cc: [Campbell, Angus GEN](#)
Subject: FW: Victorian Request for Assistance - RFA013, RFA014 & RFA015 [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]
Date: Thursday, 25 June 2020 2:50:58 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#) **Importance:** High

UNCLASSIFIED

From: Andrew S Crisp (DJCS) [@justice.vic.gov.au](mailto:andrew.crisp@justice.vic.gov.au)
Sent: Thursday, 25 June 2020 12:31 PM
To: EMACOV1D-19 <[\[REDACTED\]@homeaffairs.gov.au](#)>; SCC-Vic <[\[REDACTED\]@scc.vic.gov.au](#)>; ccc <[\[REDACTED\]@homeaffairs.gov.au](#)>; JOSS.VIC <[\[REDACTED\]@defence.gov.au](#)>
Cc: <[\[REDACTED\]@defence.gov.au](#)>; <[\[REDACTED\]@defence.gov.au](#)>; <[\[REDACTED\]@homeaffairs.gov.au](#)>; <[\[REDACTED\]@emv.vic.gov.au](#)>; <[\[REDACTED\]@justice.vic.gov.au](#)>; <[\[REDACTED\]@justice.vic.gov.au](#)>

Subject: RE: Victorian Request for Assistance - RFA013, RFA014 & RFA015 [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Good afternoon all,

Based on changing operational and resourcing requirements I am writing to advise you that Victoria no longer wishes to progress RFA 15, the request for up to 850 resources to support our hotel quarantine operation (Op Soteria).

Thank you for your efforts in progressing this request and as always, we sincerely appreciate the support of EMA and the ADF. Regards,

Andrew Andrew

Crisp APM

Emergency Management Commissioner

Emergency Management Victoria

Level 23, 121 Exhibition Street, Melbourne 3000

EA: [\[REDACTED\]](#) | Ph +61 [\[REDACTED\]](#) | E [\[REDACTED\]@emv.vic.gov.au](#)
www.emv.vic.gov.au



Working in conjunction with Communities,
Ph Government, Agencies and Business

+61 | E

[@emv.vic.gov.au](mailto:[REDACTED]@emv.vic.gov.au)

This office is based on the land of the Traditional Owners, the people of the Kulin Nations. We acknowledge their history, culture and Elders both past and present.

From: EMACOV1D-19 [@homeaffairs.gov.au](mailto:[REDACTED]@homeaffairs.gov.au)
Sent: Wednesday, 24 June 2020 8:52 PM
To: SCC-Vic <[\[REDACTED\]@scc.vic.gov.au](#)>; ccc

[REDACTED]

<[REDACTED]@homeaffairs.gov.au>; JOSS.VIC <[REDACTED]@defence.gov.au>
Cc: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@defence.gov.au>; [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@defence.gov.au>;
Andrew S Crisp (DJCS) <[REDACTED]@justice.vic.gov.au>; EMACOV1D-19 [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@homeaffairs.gov.au>; [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@homeaffairs.gov.au>
Subject: RE: Victorian Request for Assistance - RFA013, RFA014 & RFA015
[SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

UNCLASSIFIED

Good evening SCC,
Defence has accepted all tasks as per RFA013, RFA014 and RFA015 without cost recovery.
Kind regards,

[REDACTED]
Assistant Director, Planning and Engagement
Crisis & Security Management Branch
Security & Resilience Group Department
of Home Affairs

P: 02 [REDACTED] | M:+61 [REDACTED] | E: [REDACTED]@homeaffairs.gov.au

UNCLASSIFIED UNCLASSIFIED

From: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@scc.vic.gov.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 24 June 2020 8:03 PM
To: ccc [REDACTED]@homeaffairs.gov.au>; JOSS.VIC [REDACTED]@defence.gov.au>
Cc: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@defence.gov.au>; [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@defence.gov.au>;
EMACOV1D-19 <[REDACTED]@homeaffairs.gov.au>; Andrew Crisp (DJCS)
<[REDACTED]@justice.vic.gov.au>

Subject: Victorian Request for Assistance - RFA013, RFA014 & RFA015
On behalf of the Emergency Management Commissioner, please see attached three request
for assistance from Victoria for support to the COVID-19 response, Many thanks

[REDACTED]
**Executive Officer for the
Emergency Management Commissioner
SCC-Vic (EMC Executive Officer)**

State Control Centre | Level 4, 8 Nicholson Street, East Melbourne VIC 3002

Ph: [REDACTED]
Email: [REDACTED]@scc.vic.gov.au | Web: <https://cop.em.vic.gov.au>

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Attachment 2

REQUEST FOR AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT NON-FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Requests for Australian Government non-financial assistance may be phoned to Emergency Management Australia (EMA) in the first instance, but must be confirmed by e-mail from the nominated official. The format for requests is as follows:

SUBJECT:	National support requested to assist COVID-19 (Victorian response)
DATE & TIME:	24 June 2020, 1900hrs AEDT
REQUEST ID:	EMV-RFA-015CV
SITUATION:	<p>The Victorian State Control Centre (SCC) is seeking the support to ensure the emergency response to COVID-19 pandemic remains effective with the increase in positive cases identified within the state.</p> <p>Since mandatory hotel quarantine for overseas travellers entering Australia in March 2020, Victoria has managed approximately 18,500 individuals. With the continued need to maintain the mandatory quarantine, it has been identified that there is the lack of access to skilled resources to undertake specific functions.</p> <p>This request is to seek personnel augmentation and assistance for Victorian Department of Health and Human Services in the mandatory quarantine of individuals who have returned from overseas (Operations Soteria).</p>
OWN RESOURCES:	Emergency Management Victoria has exhausted internal or contract sources across emergency agencies to fulfil these roles. ADF personnel in other States have proven to be uniquely suited to roles and functions being carried out within the current environment.
PRIORITY:	<p>To commence 26 June 2020 for a period ending 31 July 2020.</p> <p>Due to the scale and complexity of the crisis, this is a high priority request, to ensure the stability in the established systems and process are continued.</p>
DELIVERY LOCATION:	The personnel would be required to operate from Melbourne metropolitan hotels that are being used for mandatory quarantine
TASK DESCRIPTION:	<p>The request is for up to 850 personnel to provide compliance and monitoring support to Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) at the designated hotels being used for mandatory quarantine.</p> <p>The Personnel will be required to operate on shift rotation basis, 7 days a week for the duration of this request.</p>

JURISDICTION PRIMARY POINT OF CONTACT DETAILS

NAME:	[REDACTED]		
POSITION TITLE:	Emergency Management Commissioner Executive Officer		
AGENCY/ GROUP:	Emergency Management Victoria		
BH PHONE:	[REDACTED]	MOB:	[REDACTED]
E-MAIL:	[REDACTED]	@scc.vic.gov.au	[REDACTED]

REQUEST APPROVED BY (MUST BE NOMINATED JURISDICTIONAL OFFICIAL)

NAME:	Andrew Crisp	
SIGNATURE:		
POSITION TITLE:	Emergency Management Commissioner	
BH PHONE:	1300 368 722	MOB:

COMMENTS: DHHS representative will be available at on site at each location to support the deployed personnel in the field.

The tasked personnel will be required to support the State Authorised Officers in active monitoring of quarantine compliance by individuals in hotel quarantine.

Dependant on the operational need, the number of Defence assets may be released when they are no longer required, to enable reallocation and/or crew respite.