

UPDATE ON CORONAVIRUS MEASURES

MEDIA STATEMENT

05 May 2020
Prime Minister

4.04 PM

The National Cabinet met today to further discuss options for easing restrictions over the coming months, helping prepare Australians to go back to work in a COVID-19 safe environment and getting the economy back to a more sustainable level.

The Chief Medical Officer Professor Brendan Murphy provided an update on the measures underway, the latest data and medical advice in relation to COVID-19.

There have been 6,849 confirmed cases in Australia and sadly 96 people have died. There are now only around 1,000 active cases in Australia, and over the past week, daily infection rates have remained low.

We need to continue to have the right controls in place to test more people, trace those who test positive and respond to local outbreaks when they occur. These are precedent conditions to enable Australia to relax baseline restrictions and enable Australians to live and work in a COVID-19 safe economy.

National Cabinet encouraged Australians to download the COVIDSafe app to ensure that we can protect Australians and reset baseline restrictions. Nearly 5 million Australians have already downloaded the COVIDSafe app. This is an enormous achievement, but more is needed.

National Cabinet welcomed New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern for a part of today's meeting to discuss our countries' approaches to combating the virus. We agreed to start work on a trans-Tasman COVID-19 safe travel zone, easing travel restrictions between Australia and New Zealand. This arrangement would be put in place once it is safe to do so, with necessary health, transport and other protocols to protect public health. Any arrangement would need to factor in state and territory movement restrictions. A travel zone would assist both countries' economic recovery, help kick-start our tourism and transport sectors, enhance existing sporting links, and reunite families and friends.

National Cabinet agreed to meet again on Friday 8 May 2020.

Establishing a COVID-19 Safe Australia - returning to work safely and confidently

The Chair of the National COVID-19 Coordination Commission, Mr Neville Power, briefed National Cabinet on the importance of a proactive and consistent approach to supporting businesses and workers to safely return to work - drawing on the National COVID-19 Safe Workplace Principles that had been agreed by National Cabinet on 24 April 2020.

National Cabinet agreed that Safework Australia would be the single source of information, which will allow businesses to plan with confidence and consistency. A toolkit is being developed for businesses to use, to help them be work ready in a COVID-19 safe environment. National Cabinet encouraged businesses to be prepared for reopening, to protect their workers and protect their business.

Establishing a COVID-19 Safe Australia - removing baseline restrictions

National Cabinet agreed to establish a three step framework to gradually remove baseline restrictions to enable Australians to live in a COVID-19 safe economy. Details will be determined by National Cabinet on Friday 8 May 2020.

Individual states and territories will determine the timeframe for graduating between steps and individual restrictions to remove. This reflects the fact that states and territories are at different stages of the pandemic response, with 6 of 8 states and territories now recording multiple zero case days.

National Cabinet noted that the Northern Territory has announced that by 5 June 2020, it will be able to remove many restrictions, while maintaining social distancing, hygiene and travel restrictions.

It is National Cabinet's aim to have a sustainable COVID-19 safe economy in July 2020. This will be subject to strong epidemiology results, testing, tracing and local surge health response capacity. National Cabinet noted that some health measures will need to be in place for a considerable period of time including social distancing, strong hygiene and international travel restrictions. Some jurisdictions may choose to maintain interstate travel restrictions.

Justice sector Preparedness

National Cabinet discussed the importance of making sure there is access to legal support for those Australians who need it during this time.

That's why the Australian Government will provide an additional \$63.3 million for the legal assistance sector:

- \$49.8 million for additional frontline legal services, such as legal advice or representation, and with 40 per cent to be used for matters involving domestic violence; and
- \$13.5 million for IT costs to support the sector's transition to delivering assistance virtually and online

National Cabinet agreed that it is important to quickly finalise agreement of the National Legal Assistance Partnership to ensure continuity for services, such as Community Legal Centres. Under that Partnership agreement, the Australian Government will provide more than \$2 billion over the next five years to help Australians with legal issues.

Given the importance of protecting victims of domestic violence, there was also a commitment from all Premiers and Chief Ministers that domestic violence orders will continue to be available and enforced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Managing COVID-19 in corrections facilities

National Cabinet agreed that jurisdictions will plan for and manage COVID-19 outbreaks in prisons in accordance with the Communicable Diseases Network Australia National Guidelines for the Prevention, Control and Public Health Management of COVID-19 Outbreaks in Correctional and Detention Facilities in Australia.

National Cabinet agreed that supply of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) to corrections facilities should be considered a priority in the context of the national supply of PPE, as additional supplies become available and if COVID-19 cases are confirmed in the sector.

The Australian Government will, in partnership with jurisdictions, develop 'Safe Travel Plans' for newly released Indigenous prisoners including access to self-isolation accommodation and secure transport to designated communities.

PRIME MINISTER OF
AUSTRALIA
The Hon Scott Morrison MP