

NATIONAL CABINET STATEMENT**MEDIA STATEMENT**

29 Mar 2020
Prime Minister



Australian governments met again today as the National Cabinet to take further action to slow the spread of coronavirus to save lives and to save livelihoods.

We will be living with this virus for at least six months, so social distancing measures to slow this virus down must be sustainable for at least that long to protect Australian lives and help Australia to keep functioning.

National Cabinet noted the latest statistics and medical advice in relation to coronavirus.

Our public health measures are taking effect, with over 211,000 tests undertaken and 3,966 confirmed cases in Australia.

The rate of increase in the virus curve is slowing, but overall numbers are still increasing. While the majority of cases in Australia are connected to travellers returning to Australia from overseas, there has been some sustained community transmission in areas of Sydney and Melbourne.

National Cabinet noted the extensive work underway to procure more masks, ventilators, gloves, gowns and hand sanitiser from both international suppliers and domestic manufacturers. National Cabinet further noted that the Commonwealth had announced a package of \$1.1 billion to boost mental health services, domestic violence support, Medicare assistance for people at home and emergency food relief.

National Cabinet welcomed the new coronavirus app and WhatsApp channel that were released today by the Commonwealth Government. The app is now available on Apple and Android devices. The WhatsApp channel can be accessed by entering [aus.gov.au/whatsapp](https://www.aus.gov.au/whatsapp) into your internet browser.

These new platforms provide a trusted source of information for Australians looking for important advice on how they can protect themselves and others, current restrictions on social gatherings, how they can access support and the latest data on Australian cases.

The app also allows Australians to voluntarily register if they are self-isolating to provide governments with important information to protect public health and safety.

National Cabinet noted that there have been significant measures put in place that restrict gatherings including limits on retail premises. In some jurisdictions, retail outlets need to be prepared for further measures and adapt to different ways of engaging customers such as online and home delivery services.

Indoor and Outdoor Public gatherings

National Cabinet agreed to limit both indoor and outdoor gatherings to two persons only.

Exceptions to this limit include:

- People of the same household going out together;
- Funerals - a maximum of 10 people;
- Wedding - a maximum of 5 people;

- Family units.

Individual states and territories may choose to mandate and/or enforce this requirement.

National Cabinet's strong guidance to all Australians is to stay home unless for:

- shopping for what you need - food and necessary supplies;
- medical or health care needs, including compassionate requirements;
- exercise in compliance with the public gathering requirements;
- work and study if you can't work or learn remotely.

National Cabinet agreed that playgrounds, skate parks and outside gyms in public places will be closed. Bootcamps will be reduced to two persons, including the trainer.

These measures will be in place from midnight tomorrow night.

Social Distancing - further measures

National Cabinet discussed further restrictions on activities and venues. Overseas experience indicates further restrictions on personal movement and businesses will be required should the severity of the outbreak worsen in Australia.

States and territories agreed they would implement further measures specific to their own region, including closing categories of venues, where medical advice supported this action. These measures would be risk-based and targeted at non-essential activities.

Australians will still be able to access the goods and services needed to safely and sustainably live their lives.

Advice for Senior Australians including those with existing health conditions

The care and wellbeing of senior Australians remains a priority in this uncertain time.

All Australians respect and value the contribution that older Australians make to our community.

Coronavirus has more serious impacts on older Australians, those over 70 years of age and Australians with existing health conditions or comorbidities.

National Cabinet's strong advice is for self-isolation at home to the maximum extent practicable for Australians:

- over 70 years of age;
- over 60 years of age who have existing health conditions or comorbidities;
- indigenous Australians over the age of 50 who have existing health conditions or comorbidities.

These groups should limit contact with others as much as possible when they travel outside.

Commercial and residential tenancies

As part of its work on helping businesses hibernate, National Cabinet agreed that short-term intervention is needed for commercial tenancies. Work on this has begun, but there is more to do, including for residential tenancies.

National Cabinet agreed to a moratorium on evictions over the next six months for commercial and residential tenancies in financial distress who are unable to meet their commitments due to the impact of coronavirus.

Commercial tenants, landlords and financial institutions are encouraged to sit down together to find a way through to ensure that businesses can survive and be there on the other side. As part of this, National Cabinet agreed to a common set of principles, endorsed by Treasurers, to underpin and govern intervention to aid commercial tenancies as follows:

- a short term, temporary moratorium on eviction for non-payment of rent to be applied across commercial tenancies impacted by severe rental distress due to coronavirus;
- tenants and landlords are encouraged to agree on rent relief or temporary amendments to the lease;
- the reduction or waiver of rental payment for a defined period for impacted tenants;
- the ability for tenants to terminate leases and/or seek mediation or conciliation on the grounds of financial distress;
- commercial property owners should ensure that any benefits received in respect of their properties should also benefit their tenants in proportion to the economic impact caused by coronavirus;
- landlords and tenants not significantly affected by coronavirus are expected to honour their lease and rental agreements; and
- cost-sharing or deferral of losses between landlords and tenants, with Commonwealth, state and territory governments, local government and financial institutions to consider mechanisms to provide assistance.

National Cabinet will meet again on Monday 30th March 2020.