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AUSTRALIAN COVID-19 POLICY  
RESPONSES:  
GOOD FOR HEALTH EQUITY OR A MISSED  
OPPORTUNITY?

**Menzies Centre for Health Governance**

ANU School of Regulation and Global  
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ANU College of

Asia & the Pacific

# MENZIES CENTRE FOR HEALTH GOVERNANCE REPORT, AUGUST 2020

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The opinions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Menzies Centre for Health Governance members or Advisory Group members. Any errors or omissions are the responsibility of the authors.

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# KEY MESSAGES

1. COVID-19 shines a spotlight on social and health inequities. The already widening inequities in life expectancy, premature death, non-communicable diseases and mental health issues in Australia will get worse as a consequence of COVID-19 if progressive, long-term multisectoral action is not taken.
2. The wide-ranging and rapid policy responses to COVID-19 risks and impacts at Federal and State/Territory levels are impressive and to be commended, showing that if there is political will action can happen.
3. We identified 156 specific policy measures introduced by the Federal and State/Territory Governments that are eight key social determinants of health equity: employment, income, cost of living, education, housing, infrastructure, community, legal and social services, and health care.
4. A number of positive measures were introduced to address employment, household income, and standard of living. These could go a long way to keeping people well and reducing health inequities. They must however not return to conditions that will keep people in poverty. Policies must ensure a decent standard of living and fair working conditions as we move forward.
5. To prevent an accumulation of disadvantage and health inequities throughout the life course, the temporary supports for childcare should continue and enable access to free childcare for, at the very least, socially disadvantaged households.
6. None of the housing-related measures that were introduced address the medium and long term housing precariousness that is prevalent in Australia. Unless this is fixed, social and health inequities will continue to widen. Investment in social housing could help address the gap in housing, job creation and income growth, and reduce homelessness.
7. The policy measures introduced to support aged care, disability services, the arts and family violence are very helpful in the short term. However, COVID-19 shines a light on the need for sustained and adequate funding to these sectors and organisations, particularly going forward when it is likely that these organisations will play a more vital role than ever in helping to rebuild communities.
8. COVID-19 has initiated an enormous intergenerational transfer of debt. The health consequences will be felt for decades, possibly generations. But austerity cannot be the policy response going forward. Long-term investment is vital across the conditions of daily living. Action on the structural drivers of health inequity is essential.
9. Without action on climate change, health inequities will be exacerbated. Good social policy is good climate adaptation policy, and good for health. Climate change mitigation must focus on the consumptagenic system - the institutions, policies, processes, actors, and ideas that embed, facilitate, and normalise the dominance of a system addicted to growth and profits irrespective of the environmental, social, and health costs.
10. 'Bouncing back better' from COVID-19 could see a healthier, more equitable and sustainable Australia if political leaders choose to use this unfortunate event to drive positive societal change. We cannot have deregulations in social, health and environment sectors in order to "kickstart the economy", nor the dominance of certain gender, economic and political lenses in the recovery governance processes. Governing going forward requires a new social compact, supported by a national whole of government health equity strategy.

# INTRODUCTION

The impact of COVID-19 on the health and wellbeing of Australian society is not limited to the direct morbidity and tragic loss of life. A healthy society requires that people have enough material resources to live life with dignity and a sense of control over their lives.<sup>1</sup> Without these, the physical and mental health of people suffer. Sadly, COVID-19 has rocked these already unstable foundations: many people are struggling with widespread economic insecurity, uncertainty about the rules of society post COVID-19, and anxiety about the future.<sup>2</sup>



COVID-19 will most likely widen health inequities in Australia and globally. While it is touching everyone's life, the risk of COVID-19 and its impact are distributed unequally. Rates of existing health conditions that put people at risk are elevated among older people, poor, and marginalised racial and ethnic groups.<sup>3-6</sup> In addition, the impact of governments' responses to it are not felt equally across society because of the underlying inequities in everyday life.<sup>7,8</sup>

People experiencing poverty, precarious employment, high levels of existing debt, homelessness, and poor access to quality health and social services are already socially marginalised, financially stressed and experiencing little sense of control over their lives. These populations will disproportionately feel the impacts of this pandemic on their physical and mental health now and well into the future without appropriate government intervention and support.

COVID-19 highlights, therefore, the critical need to address the social determinants of health inequities – the conditions in which we are born, grow, live, work, and age, and that are shaped by deep structural drivers of power, money, and resources.<sup>9</sup> These conditions, and thus people's health, are very much influenced by public policy well beyond the health sector.

*The inequities in everyday living conditions such as educational opportunities, employment and working conditions, social protection, the nature of homes, communities, towns, and cities, and access to services are a consequence of "poor policies, unfair economic arrangements, and bad politics".<sup>9</sup>*

The Australian Government, like many governments worldwide, has introduced multiple policies aimed at reducing the spread of the disease, and economic stabilisation and recovery. Various measures included in each of these policies influence the conditions in which people across Australia are born, grow, live, work, and age. If we are to prevent a massive widening in health inequities going forward it is vital to pay attention to the health and social equity implications of such policies.

To this end, in this report we examine Australian Federal and State/Territory Government policy responses to the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. The intention of this analysis is to illustrate how multisectoral public policy could keep Australian society healthy, reduce social and health inequities, and reduce the financial burden to the health and social systems that is associated with health inequities.

These same policy responses could go a long way to mitigate the health harms from climate change.

'Bouncing back better' from COVID-19 could see a healthier, more equitable and sustainable Australia if political leaders choose to use this unfortunate event to drive positive societal change.

We collated Federal and State/Territory Government policies and their specific measures that were announced in response to COVID-19 during the period 12 March to 16 June 2020. We included policy measures across sectors that influence people's daily living conditions and thus health, such as housing, income support, and education and training. We did not include policies specific to lockdowns or social distancing as the implications of these for health equity are mediated through attendant impacts on other areas such as employment.

Policy responses were identified using a structured search of Federal and respective State/Territory Government websites including dedicated COVID-19 response pages, written media announcements, and department sites including health, treasury, human services, and education, training and employment.

Policy responses were also identified through media coverage (e.g. the ABC, Guardian Australia), which was then verified by checking relevant government sites for details. Because of the dynamic nature of government responses at the time of compiling the report, prior to assessing the policies we checked the information sources for each policy measure and included changes or updates where applicable. We also followed up media announcements of major policy changes made in the course of writing the report.

Many of the policy responses at both the Federal and State/Territory level were announced as large packages, comprising several policy measures. Where possible, we separated out these packages into their constituent measures to provide a more granular analysis of implications for various social determinants.

Information about the policies was recorded in the Menzies Centre for Health Governance 'COVID-19 Health Equity Policy Monitor' database. The following details were recorded for each response:

- > policy area (e.g. childcare, housing, employment);
- > specific policy details (e.g. for the JobKeeper subsidy this included the subsidy amount and employer and employee eligibility criteria);
- > time frame for which the policy applied (where specified); and
- > policy information sources (e.g. government fact sheet and/or weblink).

Using an adaption of the World Health Organization Commission on the Social Determinants of Health<sup>9</sup> conceptual framework (Figure 1), policies were categorised first according to the broad socio-economic domain that they targeted (e.g. economic stability), and then by specific social determinants within these (e.g. income, employment).

Within each social determinant, policy measures at the Federal level and for each respective State/Territory were grouped together. We qualitatively assessed each policy measure for both the potential risks for health inequity and the opportunities to improve health equity.

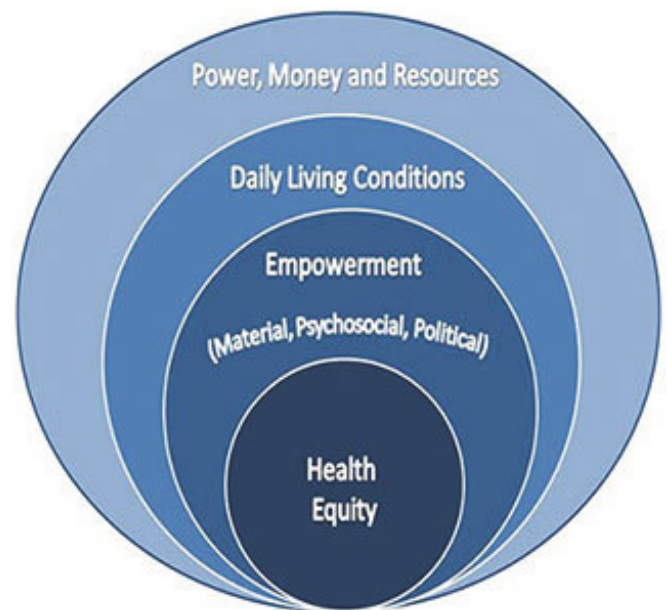


Figure 1. The social determinants of health equity

## HEALTH EQUITY IMPLICATIONS OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT COVID-19 POLICY RESPONSE

Many of the policy measures in economic, social, housing, infrastructure, and community sectors that have been introduced by the Federal and State/Territory Governments are to be commended. Many of them offer real hope for health equity for the reasons described below.

We identified 156 specific policy measures introduced by the Federal and State/Territory Governments in response to COVID-19 within the period under review. There are eight categories of response that relate to the social determinants of health.

Most of the policy measures focus on economic stability through matters of employment, income and cost of living, but the spread of policies is much wider reaching across issues of education, housing, infrastructure, and community and health services.

All of the State/Territory Governments introduced policies that supported or reinforced the Federal level response. The breakdown of types and numbers of policies in each social determinant of health by Federal and State/Territory Government is shown in Table 1. Appendix 1 provides the full list and summary of each policy package and specific measures. A general description of the bundle of policies across key social determinants of health is provided below alongside the relationship to and implications for health equity.

**Table 1: Overview of the types of policy responses at Federal and State/Territory levels**

	FED	NSW	ACT	VIC	SA	WA	NT	QLD	TAS
Employment	7	5	7	5	6	3	3	8	6
Income	5	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	2
Cost of living	1	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	1
Education	3	2	2	0	1	2	0	1	3
Housing	1	4	3	5	2	3	1	6	5
Infrastructure	4	2	1	0	0	0	2	0	2
Community	5	3	3	3	0	3	0	2	3
Health care	2	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	2
Total	28	19	20	15	10	14	7	19	24

## Employment, income and cost of living

“The income security and job opportunities created through investments in the economic, social and environmental recovery post-COVID will be the basis for a human-centred approach ensuring social justice. Decent jobs, robust health systems and universal social protection - the main building blocks of the infrastructure of life - should be at the center”. Director General, ILO10



Labour market and social protection mechanisms are the main ways in which the majority of people receive income. When good, they can provide financial security, social status, an identity and self-worth, and social connections.<sup>11,12</sup>

When COVID-19 hit, the necessary public health lockdown measures shook the Australian economy and labour market. Many businesses are on the brink of closure. Nearly 600,000 people lost their job in April alone,<sup>13</sup> and thousands more were furloughed. Financial stress, job insecurity, and uncertainty about the future is currently widespread.

This is on top of already high levels of poverty (14%), income inequality in Australia,<sup>14</sup> and a labour market with high levels of precarious employment (including temporary work, part-time work, zero-hours contracts, and piece work)<sup>15</sup> that have adversely affected Australians' income, job security and access to paid sick leave.<sup>16-19</sup>

Together, these employment and working conditions pose major risks to health equity.<sup>20-25</sup> Money is essential to feed and clothe ourselves and loved ones, to access and maintain decent and safe housing and living conditions, and to access health care. Low living standards influence lifelong trajectories and intergenerational poverty.<sup>26,27</sup>

Poverty, financial stress and job insecurity also affect health through psychosocial pathways – influencing people's sense of control by undermining their ability to plan and to participate in everyday life. Without control people's sense of self-worth can fall and gives rise to feelings of stress and social exclusion.<sup>28</sup>

Unemployment has been shown to create loss of identity and feelings of hopelessness.<sup>24,29</sup> Mortality is significantly higher among temporary workers compared to permanent workers.<sup>30-32</sup> Poor mental health outcomes are associated with precarious employment.<sup>18,33,34</sup> Perceptions of work insecurity can lead to poor physical and mental health.<sup>33</sup>

In response to COVID-19, the Federal and State/Territory Governments introduced multiple policy measures that address issues of income, employment and living standards, with the ultimate aim of stimulating the economy.

## Employment

The major policy focus of the COVID-19 economic response has been supporting businesses to survive. A suite of measures were introduced at Federal and State/Territory levels that provide financial support and regulatory changes to help firms remain in business. These measures include subsidies, fee waivers, rent relief, loans, specific sector measures, and grants (Appendix 1).

The centrepiece of the Federal Government response is the JobKeeper wage subsidy, which was introduced to increase cashflow for businesses that have had their revenues significantly affected by COVID-19, and which would enable the continued employment of their staff (rather than having to let them go). This is an excellent intervention, providing employment and financial security to more than 3 million people, many of whom are low paid workers.

It would be good to revise the conditions of the policy to prevent any unintended widening of social and health inequities. JobKeeper is restricted to employees who are Australian or New Zealand citizens or permanent residents. Casual employees are only eligible if they were with their employer on a regular basis for 12-months as of 1 March 2020.

Analysis has shown nearly one million casual workers are ineligible, many in accommodation and food services, retail trade and health care and social assistance.<sup>35</sup> JobKeeper-related amendments to the Fair Work Act now enable employers to temporarily vary work arrangements. This includes 'Enabling Stand Down Directions' that allow an employer to direct an employee to not work particular days or work reduced hours (including zero). 'Enabling Directions' allow an employer to assign employees to different duties, to work somewhere other than their usual place of work, and work on different days and times.

As noted earlier, job insecurity and precariousness, which is what the amendments to the Fair Work Act enables, is not good for health<sup>18</sup> and is more common in low paid, and youth and female dominated sectors. These groups are more likely to be in the retail and hospitality sector where much of the job losses and job risks have occurred.

**The Jobkeeper subsidy is to be commended, providing immediate financial relief and security to businesses and workers. Going forward, the longer term systemic issues of poor employment arrangements and working conditions, particularly in these sectors, must be addressed if employment-related health inequities are to be reduced.**

## Income support

Social protection policies were introduced which help ensure people have enough money to survive during the pandemic (Appendix 1). These are aimed particularly at helping the thousands of people who found themselves unexpectedly unemployed. The policies give additional money to people reliant on income support schemes, and widened the eligibility of who can access that money.

Measures were also introduced that enable early access to people's superannuation and/or long service leave income. Data from the ATO in May showed that nearly 500,000 Australians under 30 had accessed their super, raising concerns that this will significantly affect their retirement income.<sup>36</sup> There were also a few one-off payments/support grants.

The major and very positive policy response from the Federal Government was the provision of additional money to people on income support schemes. Since the end of April, the Federal Government has provided an additional \$550 per fortnight to people on income support schemes including JobSeeker (and all payments progressively transitioning to JobSeeker), Youth Allowance, Parenting Payment, Austudy, ABSTUDY, Farm Household Allowance, and Special Benefits. This was an important and welcome policy that was critically important to some of the most disadvantaged Australians.

The Coronavirus Supplement to income support payments will drop to \$250 per fortnight from September and finish at the end of 2020. In addition to the drop in level of payment, people will need to return to meeting job searching obligations in an employment context of profoundly limited jobs.



**Analysis by the Australia Institute suggests that reducing the supplement in September will push 370,000 Australians, including 80,000 children, into poverty.<sup>37</sup> Going forward, efforts to ensure a living income well above the poverty line would be most welcomed and supported.**

## Cost of living

In addition to the specific income support schemes described above, a few measures were introduced that address cost of living challenges, coming in the form of relief funds, bill payment assistance, and freezes on bill/fee increases. These were constructive and valuable policies, helping address acute financial and other material stresses.

Going forward, in addition to ensuring social protection systems provide a level of income that is sufficient for healthy living, minimum wages should also be sufficient for healthy living such that social protection policies and work policies are complementary. Methods exist for calculating the minimum cost for healthy living in Australia.<sup>27</sup>

**Keeping in place the positive changes to income support schemes that occurred due to COVID-19 will go a long way to protecting people from poverty and prevent a widening of health inequities. Generous universal social protection systems are associated with much better health outcomes, including lower excess mortality among the old, and lower mortality levels among socially disadvantaged groups.<sup>38</sup> Reducing health inequities requires social protection systems that allow a healthy standard of living below which nobody should fall.**



## Early child development and education

*"This is a universal crisis, and, for some children, the impact will be lifelong. Moreover, the harmful effects of this pandemic will not be distributed equally. They are expected to be most damaging for children in the poorest countries, and in the poorest neighbourhoods, and for those in already disadvantaged or vulnerable situations". Executive Director, UNICEF<sup>39</sup>*



Early childhood experiences, and early and later education, lay critical foundations for the entire lifecourse.<sup>40</sup> While the Australian Government has provided support for early childcare services, there has been notably little policy response to help students, parents and educational establishments deal with the COVID-19 impact, despite the universally recognised importance of primary and secondary education.

### Childcare

Healthy development during the early years provides the essential building blocks in social, emotional, cognitive, and physical well-being. Childcare is therefore an extremely important setting for children's health, and provides a mechanism via which to reduce social and health inequities across the life course. In 2017, 49% of Australian children aged 0–12 years used formal or informal early childhood education and care.<sup>41</sup>

When COVID-19 hit and households went into lockdown and people lost jobs and income, children who might otherwise have been at childcare were now being kept at home, thus putting financial pressure on childcare services. The Early Childhood Education & Care Relief Package was introduced because of COVID-19 as a temporary measure to ensure that childcare centres survived the economic impact of the lockdown.

The Federal Government paid childcare services a weekly subsidy to continue to deliver early childhood education and care, and families were able to access childcare for free during this period. This was incredibly positive, and particularly helpful for low income households.

From July to end of September 2020 the Federal Government will provide childcare services with half of the previous subsidy. Families will resume paying childcare fee gaps. This is unfortunate. Stopping the subsidy will disadvantage already disadvantaged households and children.

The evidence tells us that once a child starts from behind, the prospect of catching up to their peers, in schooling and in life, is much diminished.<sup>42</sup> The evidence also tells us the effects of disadvantage begin before birth, escalate in the first thousand days of life, and continue over the life course. Many health problems among adults have their roots in disadvantage in the early years of life, including major public health problems such as obesity, heart disease, and mental health problems<sup>43</sup>. The Australia Institute's economic calculation indicates that retaining free childcare would have short term stimulus benefits as well as long term benefits for the economy and equity.<sup>44</sup>

**To prevent an accumulation of disadvantage and health inequities throughout the life course, the temporary supports for childcare should continue and enable access to free childcare at least for socially disadvantaged households.**

### Primary and secondary education

Despite the widespread closure of schools and a shift to home-schooling, there has been no support provided to primary or secondary level public education in response to COVID-19, except for some digital delivery support from the ACT government. According to a recent report from the Grattan Institute "...most students did not learn as much while at home as they would have in their classroom – and disadvantaged students were hardest hit".<sup>45</sup> Even before COVID-19, around 25% of Australian children were assessed to be developmentally vulnerable on entering school at age five. That percentage rose to more than 44% in communities experiencing disadvantage.<sup>46</sup>

Formal education remains the major route out of disadvantage, but poorer children perform educationally less well than better-off children. Children dropping out of school, or not entering employment or training after formal schooling, are a particularly high-risk group. This is a very real issue now in light of the pandemic impact on schooling.<sup>45</sup> However, a much more systemic restructure of the education system is needed to address social and health inequities.

### Vocational education and training

Vocational training received an important positive financial boost through the Federal JobTrainer initiative. This has similarities to the JobKeeper policy, in that it is a subsidy to businesses to cover a percentage of the wage (50%) paid to apprentices and trainees. The second part of the response provides more opportunities in VET courses in areas of identified need from September 2020, with matched funding from States/Territories.

### Tertiary education

Australia's universities have been hard hit by the COVID pandemic primarily because of the loss of international students. The Federal Higher Education Relief Package provides funding for 2020 for domestic students. Public universities have not been eligible for the JobKeeper allowance and the sector is threatened with mass redundancies. A recent government announcement proposed measures which would particularly disadvantage future students wishing to study humanities, law or social science topics.

The inappropriateness of this and its possible impact on health has already been canvassed on social media<sup>47</sup>. In a society recovering from the ravages of an epidemic the critical skills learnt in these disciplines will be an essential asset for the future.<sup>48</sup>

**Most of the COVID-19 policy responses in the education sector have been about keeping businesses afloat. While these responses will have some positive effects for health, the likelihood of increased inequities in educational outcomes and possible drop-off in people completing higher education is very concerning for health equity. Public universities should be better supported as institutions that will provide critical education and skills training post COVID-19.**

## Neighbourhood and physical environment

*“the impact of COVID-19 will be most devastating in poor and densely populated urban areas, especially for the one billion people living in informal settlements and slums worldwide as well as for refugees, internally displaced people and migrants. Populations living in overcrowded housing and those essential workers who keep city functioning are also proving particularly vulnerable.” Executive Director, UNHABITAT*

Where people live affects their health and chances of leading flourishing lives. Communities and neighbourhoods that ensure access to basic goods and shelter, that are socially cohesive, that are designed to promote good physical and psychological well-being, and that are protective of the natural environment are essential for health equity.<sup>49-51</sup>

## Housing

Housing is one of the areas that received government intervention following COVID-19, although the focus of the policies are not about the housing per se, but rather on providing work for tradespeople. The Federal Government HomeBuilder Program offers eligible owner occupiers a \$25,000 grant to build a new home or substantially renovate their existing home. The main beneficiaries of this program are people who can already afford major renovations.

At the State/Territory level, there were a number of subsidies and grants provided to tenants who have lost their jobs, plus financial and regulatory support for property owners to enable them to drop rents. There were also measures introduced for social housing. These subsidies and grants have been for the most part beneficial in addressing emergency circumstances linked to the pandemic and should be applauded.

*“You cant stay home if you don’t have one. And you can’t wash your hands and protect yourself if you don’t have access to soap and water. This pandemic has laid bare some of the deepest inequalities in our society – not least the need for secure housing.” Tweet from Daniel Andrews Premier of Victoria, 29<sup>th</sup> July 2020*

While the State/Territory level interventions go some way to address acute housing stress for people experiencing financial insecurity brought on by COVID-19, it is insufficient. The evidence highlights five key aspects of housing, and their unequal distribution, which affect health equity: i) housing hardware i.e. the physical qualities of housing such as its ability

to provide shelter from the outdoor environment; ii) space, which relates to the amount of living space that people have e.g. overcrowding and high density living, iii) place i.e. neighbourhood quality as well as the location of housing and its ability to facilitate access to essential services and employment opportunities, iv) housing tenure, which relates to the length of time and the terms and conditions under which accommodation is held, and v) affordability, which refers to residents’ capacity to pay for their housing.<sup>52</sup>

Australia, as in many countries, struggles with the availability of, and access to, affordable quality housing. Home ownership has been declining in Australia in the past two decades. For those who do own their home, many young and middle-aged people have large mortgages that put them in financially vulnerable positions.<sup>53</sup>

There is a shortage of affordable private rental housing, especially for low income households, and there has been modest investment in public housing. As a result, public housing has been unable to bridge the gap between supply and the need for affordable rental housing. For some low income households, precarious housing circumstances will result in homelessness.<sup>53</sup> This housing precariousness is closely connected to employment and financial security – insecurely employed households are five times as likely to have unaffordable housing, and housing costs mediate the impact of insecure employment on mental health.<sup>54</sup>

There are important calls from the social sector and industry to reorient the HomeBuilder Program and stimulate the economy with jobs in energy efficient and solar, low-income housing installation through a National Low Income Energy Productivity Program. This would create the necessary jobs, cut energy bills for people on low incomes, and reduce carbon emissions. This would all be good for health equity.<sup>55</sup>

**None of the housing-related policies that were introduced due to COVID-19 address the medium and long term housing precariousness that is prevalent in Australia. Unless this is fixed, social and health inequities will continue to widen. Investment in social (public and community) housing could help bridge the gap in housing investment, job creation and income growth and at the same time reduce homelessness.<sup>56</sup>**

## Infrastructure

The Federal Government introduced four policy initiatives focused on infrastructure – shovel ready projects; road safety works; local road and community infrastructure, and earlier than planned provision of grants to assist local councils. State and Territory Governments also made significant investment in infrastructure initiatives (Appendix 1). Expenditure on capital works was brought forward, and grants were given for the maintenance of public buildings, parks and roads, and improvements to workplace facilities.

These important interventions offer hope for health – there is a wealth of evidence showing that infrastructure matters for health and health equity.<sup>57</sup> Safe green places encourage people to be outdoors and are good for mental health. Accessible quality pathways and roads encourage cycling and walking. Transport infrastructure impacts upon walking behaviours, traffic injuries, noise and air quality, and attractive public buildings encourage a sense of community cohesion.<sup>58-61</sup> Unfortunately, the Australian Government policy responses missed the opportunity to invest in social housing as key infrastructure.

## Community, legal and social services

Community, legal and social services play an important role in relation to health inequities. They help mediate and redress the health impacts of risks and harms that people experience through the conditions in which they are born, grow, live, work and age. They can also engender a sense of belonging, social cohesion and wellbeing.<sup>62</sup>

In response to COVID-19, the Federal Government made four major interventions in community and social services. Although the intention of each was focused primarily on keeping people in work and therefore helping the economy, the policy response supports three sectors that are fundamental to health equity – aged care<sup>63,64</sup>, disability,<sup>65</sup> and domestic violence, and a fourth sector – the Arts, which helps create social cohesion and community wellbeing.<sup>66</sup> These policy measures to support aged care, disability services, the Arts and family violence are very helpful in the short term.

The Support for the Aged Care Sector Package provided a number of measures including a COVID-19 ‘retention bonus’ for the aged care workforce, and additional funding for residential care. Home care providers who deliver the Commonwealth Home Support Program received additional funding, including for services such as Meals on Wheels. Additional money was given to the My Aged Care service which assists families to navigate and access aged care services. These measures are helpful at a time when the aged care sector is being overwhelmed.

Various measures were included in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Support Package, including: for participants an increase to the automatic extension period for plans due to expire and a temporary 10% increase to price limits for supports including assistance with daily life, social and community participation, and health and wellbeing activities. Providers will receive a one-off advance payment to provide cash flow relief, and they will now also be able to claim 100% of the service fee if a participant cancels at short notice.

The Federal JobMaker Package for the Creative Economy is a \$250 million package to support restarting of the creative economy and those in cultural and creative industries. Various States/Territories also provided additional funding to arts organisations plus sports and recreation bodies.

There was also the Federal Community Support Package which provides an additional \$200 million for charities and other community organisations to expand support services in emergency and crisis relief, food relief, and the national debt hotline which provides help to those experiencing financial difficulties.

The impact of COVID-19 is presenting major challenges for family and domestic violence. Importantly, the Federal Government provided a support package for family and domestic violence which will be channelled through the States/Territories in concert with additional State/Territory responses. This support for family and domestic violence services is critical.

The COVID-19 lockdown measures have resulted in people who live in situations of family violence now being restricted to their homes. This isolation can exacerbate personal and collective vulnerabilities while limiting accessible and familiar support options.<sup>67</sup> In Australia we have already seen an increase in demand for domestic violence services and

reports of increased risk for children not attending schools. As stay-at-home orders came into force, the police in some parts of the country reported a 40% drop in crime overall, but a 5% increase in domestic abuse call-outs.<sup>68</sup>

A third of all women in Australia have been assaulted physically and a fifth have been assaulted sexually. One woman is murdered by an intimate partner in Australia each week, and family violence is a leading factor in a third of all cases of homelessness.<sup>69</sup> In 2015, the Federal Government proclaimed that violence against women had become a national crisis. COVID-19 surely demands urgent action on domestic and family violence.

**COVID-19 shines a light on the need for sustained and adequate funding to these sectors and organisations which provide critical social and legal support, particularly going forward when it is clear that these organisations will play a vital role in helping to rebuild communities.**

## Health care

*“The global spread of the virus has overwhelmed health systems, disrupted the global economy, and lead to widespread social disruption... all countries must make universal health coverage a priority, built on strong health systems and the foundation of primary health care...”*  
Director General, WHO



Health care systems are both a determinant of health inequities and a powerful mechanism to reduce inequities.<sup>70</sup> Appropriately configured and managed health systems provide a vehicle to improve people’s lives, protect them from the vulnerability of sickness, generate a sense of life security, and build common purpose within society. Health care systems contribute most to improving health equity where the institutions and services are organised around the principle of universal coverage (extending the same scope of quality services to the whole population, according to needs, regardless of ability to pay), and where the system as a whole is organised around primary health care.<sup>71</sup>

There have been positive health care policy responses to COVID-19. The Federal Government introduced the Primary Health Care Support Package. Central to this package is the recognition that physical distancing required new forms of patient-practitioner interactions. To that end, the package includes a new Medicare service for bulk-billed telehealth consultations available for GP, specialist and allied health services, and to people including those required to self-isolate;

people aged  $\geq 70$  years; people with chronic diseases; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples aged  $\geq 50$  years; people who are immunocompromised; pregnant women; and parents with babies. Telehealth enables patients to consult health professionals via video-conference or telephone, thus enabling healthcare workers and patients to remain at home.<sup>72</sup>

Also within the Primary Health Care Support Package was money for home medicines services to enable vulnerable groups to have prescriptions filled remotely and delivered to their homes. Additional money was committed for new respiratory clinics and Medicare-funded bulk-billed COVID-19 tests. Similar types of responses were put in place at the State/Territory level (Appendix 1). The Federal Government also provided additional money for more mental health services.

The effective leadership of the Aboriginal Community Controlled sector was highlighted in its response to the epidemic. Very quickly the sector organised to ensure that remote Aboriginal communities were protected and involved in the public health pandemic response, and Aboriginal people more generally received appropriate and timely information.<sup>73</sup> The importance of Aboriginal community control is vital to future health policy.

**The telehealth measures are positive developments but to prevent them widening health inequities, Australia's digital inequities must be addressed.<sup>74,75</sup> Similarly, if the telehealth program continues it cannot remain restricted to special needs groups.**

COVID-19 has made it very clear that publicly funded and managed health systems are the most effective and efficient. While the Australian health system has responded well there are persistent challenges that must be addressed if the health system is to live up to its potential of being a determinant of health equity.

Although the Australian system largely supports equity of access to primary health care, there are challenges including episodic primary medical care and an inequitable distribution of these services. Also, a mixed system of public and private insurance coverage in primary health care contributes to inequities in access and health outcomes.<sup>76</sup> Socio-economically advantaged women are more likely to use specialist medical, allied health, alternative health and dental services than less advantaged women.<sup>77</sup> These inequities in access and use of a range of health care services, not just the doctor, are particularly concerning in the context of chronic disease where optimal care includes use of multidisciplinary services.

In Australia the cost of most doctor visits is subsidised and there are limits on out-of-pocket costs for a given level of need. However, after adjusting for age, self-reported health status, and year, Callander and colleagues found that those in the lowest income group had 15 times the odds (95% CI, 11.7–20.8) of having catastrophic health expenditure compared to those in the highest income group.<sup>78</sup> Australia's universal health system appears to not safeguard the poorest people in society.



# MISSED OPPORTUNITIES?

Many of the very welcome and positive in-the-short-term policy responses to COVID-19 only scratch the surface of what is needed to redress and prevent a massive widening of health inequities going forward. None of the policies challenge the status quo, and in fact maintain business as usual. The inequities in power, money and resources that sit behind the conditions of everyday life will not change as a result of these policy responses. There is no attention to structural change in policies related to the social inequities that drive health inequities. There is silence when it comes to issues of taxation, especially of multinational corporations; financial regulation; trade and investment, and racism – each of which drive the conditions in which we live, and which are so unequally distributed.

For example, in the case of the policy measures focused on providing income to people experiencing financial stress. Very important, but why not actually redistribute money and opportunities in ways that will change people's socioeconomic position such that they wouldn't need handouts. Policies that provide secure employment and a decent living wage are needed. Or in the case of community services. Providing additional money to keep staff employed is good but as the terrible situation with aged care so sadly illustrates, we need long-term investment in publically funded and run front-line services. The privatised model and its inadequate regulatory framework is harmful.

Well before COVID-19, inequities in premature mortality had widened for the lowest socioeconomic group compared with the highest socioeconomic group for males and females.<sup>79</sup> People living in outer regional, remote and very remote areas had death rates that are about 40% higher than in major cities, and the gap has been increasing. The life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians while narrowing remains unacceptably high.<sup>80</sup> Non-communicable diseases have been the major burden of disease in Australia for decades and are more common among more socially disadvantaged groups. COVID-19 has resulted in major changes in NCD-related health seeking behaviours, which will lead to a possible avalanche of preventable disease and mental health issues going forward.

These inequities in life expectancy, premature death and health outcomes will widen in Australia as a consequence of COVID-19 if progressive, long-term multisectoral action is not taken. COVID-19 has initiated an incredible intergenerational transfer of debt. The direct and indirect health consequences will be felt for decades, possibly generations, to come. But austerity cannot be the policy response going forward. Investment and action is vital across the conditions of daily living. Action on the structural drivers of health inequity is essential.

The silence on climate change in Australian policy is deafening. Unless something significant changes, climate change will continue to exacerbate existing health inequities.<sup>55</sup> The green COVID-19 recovery that various commentators are talking about has many co-benefits for health and health equity. Good social and planning policy is good climate adaptation policy, and is good for health. Fundamentally, we need climate change mitigation. Such action must focus on the consumptagenic system - the institutions, policies, processes, actors, and ideas that embed, facilitate, and normalise the dominance of a system addicted to growth and profits irrespective of the environmental, social, and health costs.

'Bouncing back better' from COVID-19 could see a healthier, more equitable and sustainable Australia if political leaders choose to use this unfortunate event to drive positive societal change. We cannot have deregulations in social, health and environment sectors in order to "kickstart the economy", nor the dominance of certain gender, economic and political lenses in the recovery governance and planning processes. Governing going forward requires a new social compact, supported by a national whole of government health equity strategy.

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## APPENDIX 1: AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT COVID-19 POLICY RESPONSE

## ECONOMIC STABILITY

## Employment

**Federal – JobKeeper Wage Subsidy** (30 March to 27 September 2020): Wage subsidy of \$1,500/fortnight for each eligible employee available to businesses, not-for-profits and the self-employed. Businesses with turnovers <\$1 billion are eligible if they have experienced  $\geq 30\%$  drop in revenue, and businesses with turnovers >\$1 billion if they have experienced  $\geq 50\%$  drop. Self-employed are eligible based on the same turnover tests. Not-for-profits can access the subsidy if they have experienced  $\geq 15\%$  drop in turnover. Eligible employees include those that are Australian or New Zealand citizens or permanent residents, were on their employer's books as of 1 March 2020, and continue to be engaged by their employer. Casual employees are eligible if they were with their employer on a regular basis for 12-months as of 1 March 2020.

**Extension to JobKeeper Wage Subsidy** (28 September 2020 to 28 March 2021): Reduced rate subsidy targeted at businesses and not-for-profits that continue to be significantly impacted, delivered across 2 extension periods. From 28 September 2020 to 3 January 2021, subsidy will be paid at \$1,200/fortnight for each eligible employee who was working an average of 20+ hours/week in the 4 weeks before 1 March 2020, and \$750/fortnight for all other eligible employees. From 4 January to 28 March 2021, subsidy will be paid at \$1,000/fortnight for those employees, and \$650/fortnight for all other employees. In addition to existing JobKeeper turnover tests, businesses and not-for-profits will need to demonstrate their actual GST turnover has significantly fallen relative to comparable periods.

**JobKeeper-Related Temporary Amendments to the Fair Work Act** (9 April to 28 September 2020): Amendments enable employers who qualify for the JobKeeper payment to temporarily vary work arrangements for employees to whom those payments relate. Provisions include: 'Enabling Stand Down Directions' that allow an employer to direct an employee to not work particular days or work a reduced number of hours (including nil) than they ordinarily would. 'Enabling Directions' that allow an employer to redirect employees to different duties, to work somewhere other than their usual place of work, and work on different days and times (so long as it is reasonable to do so). An employee's hourly rate of pay cannot be reduced by an enabling direction, and they must be paid accordingly if a new duty has a higher pay rate. Employers can also request employees take annual leave at full pay under the amendments (provided they will have at least 2 weeks remaining).

**Federal – COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Fund:** \$1 billion fund to support regions and sectors disproportionately affected by COVID-19 including tourism, transport, agriculture and education. Funding will be channelled through existing or new mechanisms (e.g. fee relief, grant increases). Current initiatives include: Airlines Funding Assistance; Airfreight Support for Essential Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Industries; Additional Funding for the Export Market; Development Grants Scheme; Arts Industry Support Package.

**Federal – Boosting Cash Flow for Employers** (delivered between April and September 2020): Two equal value cash flow boosts (equivalent to 100% of salary taxes withheld) for small and medium sized businesses and not-for-profits with annual turnovers up to \$50 million. Minimum cash boost of \$10,000 (even if the business is not required to withhold tax on salary) and a maximum of \$50,000.

**Federal – Small and Medium Enterprises Loan Guarantee Scheme** (for loans lodged between early April and 30 September 2020): \$40 billion from the Federal Government to guarantee half the value of new bank loans to small and medium enterprises (annual turnover up to \$50 million). Available for loans up to \$250,000 over 3-years, and repayment free for the first 6-months.

**Federal – Support for Business Investment Initiative:** Two measures to support business investment through cash benefits including: time-limited (15 March to 30 June 2020) increase of Instant Asset Write-Off threshold to \$150,000; and accelerated depreciation deductions of 50% of the cost of new depreciable assets (for 15-months from March 2020 to June 2021). Available to businesses with an annual aggregated turnover up to \$500 million.

**Federal – Temporary Relief for Financially Distressed Businesses** (for 6-months from 25 March): Changes to insolvency processes to provide relief for businesses including: minimum outstanding amount for creditors to initiate action against a business increased from \$5,000 to \$20,000, and timeframe for businesses to respond increased from 21-days to 6-months.

**Federal – Changes to Working Rules for People on Temporary Visas:** Increase in permitted number of work hours/week for international students working in aged care and nursing. Temporary skilled visa holders who have been stood down but not laid off will maintain their visa validity, and employers can reduce their work hours without the person being in breach of their visa. Working holiday visa holders working in healthcare, childcare and agriculture are exempt from 6-month work limitation with 1 employer, and can have their visa extended for 6-months if due to expire. People on Seasonal Worker and Pacific Labour Scheme visas can remain in Australia until the health crisis has passed.

**NSW – Working for NSW Fund:** \$1 billion Working for NSW fund to sustain business, create jobs and retrain employees. Comprises \$750 million in new funding, including an additional 1,000 staff hired at Service NSW; and \$250 million deployed for additional cleaning services.

**NSW – Business Support Grants:** Grants of up to \$10,000 for small businesses and not-for-profits to support operations. Available to those with <20 employees, annual payrolls <\$900,000, and which have experienced a turnover decline of  $\geq 75\%$ . Applications open between 17 April to 1 June 2020.

**NSW – Commercial Rent Relief:** 25% land tax concession (for 2020 tax liability) plus 3-month deferral for remaining amounts for landlords who provide rent relief to commercial tenants. 6-month moratorium on rent increases and lease terminations for rental arrears (from 24 April to 24 October 2020). Available to businesses with turnover <\$50 million who experienced  $\geq 30\%$  reduction in income.

**NSW – Waivers and Deferrals for Business Fees and Charges** (from April 2020): 6-month deferral of gaming machine tax, and lotteries and Keno duties. Deferral of rents for 6-months available to commercial tenants with <20 employees and not-for-profits in Government properties. 12-month waiver of various fees and licenses for hospitality, entertainment, and construction and trades sectors.

**NSW – Payroll Tax Waivers and Deferrals** (for 6-months from March 2020): Payroll tax waived for 3-months plus option to defer for a further 3-months for businesses with payrolls  $\leq$  \$10 million. Businesses with payrolls >\$10 million can defer payroll tax for 6-months.

**Victoria – \$500 million Working for Victoria Fund:** Fund to support eligible workers to find new employment or take up training opportunities through recruitment services and a labour pool for new jobs, plus assistance for employers to find workers to fill roles. All jobs linked through the initiative will be paid at or above award rates. Funding includes \$50 million for an Agriculture Workforce Plan to support workforce needs during COVID-19 period.

**Victoria – Business Support Fund:** \$500 million Business Support Fund to provide one-off \$10,000 grants to small businesses in disproportionately affected sectors such as hospitality.

**Victoria – Commercial Tenancy Relief Scheme:** 6-month moratorium on rent increases and commercial tenancy evictions for rental arrears from 29 March 2020, applicable to tenants with annual turnover <\$50 million and with business income losses of  $\geq 30\%$ . Land tax relief for landlords who provide rent reductions to tenants experiencing financial hardship. Rent relief for commercial tenants in State Government owned buildings.

**Victoria – Payroll Tax Waiver** (2019-20 tax liability): 2019-20 payroll tax waived for businesses with taxable wages up to \$3 million.

**Victoria – Liquor License Fees Waiver** (for 2020 calendar year): Liquor license fees for 2020 waived for venues and small businesses.

**ACT – Jobs for Canberrans Fund:** Additional funding for ACT Public Service to employ extra workers on short-term contracts. Roles will have minimal prerequisites and will prioritise casual workers not benefiting from other initiatives.

**ACT – Public Service Contract Extensions:** Staff employed under contracts in the ACT Public Service will automatically have contracts extended to provide job security.

**ACT – Electricity Bill Rebates for Businesses:** \$750 rebate for June/July 2020 electricity bill for small business owners, plus \$1,000 rebate for bills issued in the first quarter of 2020-21 for cafes, takeaways and restaurants.

**ACT – Payroll Tax Waivers and Deferrals:** 6-month payroll tax waiver from April 2020 for businesses affected by prohibited activities directive such as gyms and beauty therapists. Business in construction industry can defer payroll tax interest-free for 6-months from April 2020. Businesses with wages  $\leq$  \$10 million can defer payroll tax interest-free until 1 July 2022.

**ACT – Commercial Rent Relief:** 6-month rebate on commercial rates from 1 April 2020 for landlords who reduce rents for eligible businesses (turnover reduced by  $\geq 30\%$ ). Rent relief for commercial and community tenants of State Government owned properties who have been significantly impacted.

**ACT – Waivers for Business Fees:** 12-month waiver of food business registration and liquor licencing fees from April 2020, plus outdoor dining fees for 2020/21 for liquor licensees with gross liquor purchases  $\leq$  \$3 million. Waiver/refund of gaming machine tax liabilities for clubs for March 2020.

**ACT – Support for Taxi and Rideshare Industry:** 12-month waiver of rideshare vehicle licence fee for operators from April 2020. Waiver of all government leased taxi plate fees, and one-off payment of up to \$5,000 to taxi operators who lease their taxi plates from private owners.

**Queensland – Industry Support Package:** \$1 billion towards supporting large businesses which employ people at scale, are significant in regional contexts, and can make major contributions to rapid economic recovery.

**Queensland – Jobs Support Loan Facility:** \$1 billion loan facility to provide businesses with concessional loans of up to \$250,000 to retain staff. Loans interest-free for first 12-months.

**Queensland – Payroll Tax Refunds and Deferrals:** 2-month payroll tax refund plus option to defer payroll tax for the remainder of 2020 for all small and medium businesses with payrolls <\$6.5 million. Large businesses can apply for the payroll concessions if they have been significantly impacted.

**Queensland – Commercial Rent Relief:** 6-month waiver on rent for businesses renting State Government buildings. 25% rebate on land tax for 2019-20, plus 3-month deferral for 2020-21 tax for landlords who provide rent reductions to commercial tenants

**Queensland – Waivers for Business Fees:** Various license fees and charges for tourism operators waived. 2020–21 liquor licensing fees for licensees waived. 3-month gaming tax deferral for pubs and clubs (April to June 2020).

**Queensland – Electricity Bill Rebate (one-off):** \$500 rebate on May 2020 electricity bill for small businesses and not-for-profits.

**Queensland – Worker Assistance Initiative:** \$500 million towards assisting people who have lost their job with retraining, job-matching, and transitioning into roles in essential industries such as healthcare and food production. Businesses will also receive assistance to find skilled workers for vacant positions.

**Queensland – Market Diversification and Resilience Grants:** \$500,000 in funding to provide grants of between \$2,500 to \$50,000 to agriculture and fishing exporters/businesses for diversification into new markets, training provision, and new equipment purchases.

**SA – Jobs Rescue Package:** Two new funds to support workers, businesses, and non-government organisations including a \$300 million Business and Jobs Support Fund, and a \$250 million Community and Jobs Support Fund. Small businesses and not-for-profits (annual payrolls <\$1.5 million) significantly impacted can apply for Emergency Cash Grants of \$10,000 as part of the funding.

**SA – Regional Growth Fund:** \$5 million in funding brought forward for projects which support new economic and employment activity in regional areas and strengthen rural communities. Grants available of between \$50,000 and \$2 million.

**SA – Additional \$70 million for Economic and Business Growth Fund:** Funding for industry and sector-led initiatives which improve the overall productivity and competitiveness of an industry sector or subsector.

**SA – Commercial Rent Relief Measures:** Rent waived for commercial tenants of State Government buildings from the date they were significantly impacted to 30 June 2020. 25% rebate on 2019-20 land tax liability for eligible commercial landlords who reduce rents for small and medium sized businesses.

**SA – Payroll Tax Waivers and Deferrals (from April to September 2020):** 6-month payroll tax waiver for all business with annual wages up to \$4 million. Business with annual wages >\$4 million can defer payroll tax for 6-months if they have been significantly impacted.

**SA – Liquor License Fees Waiver (for 12-months):** Liquor licensing fees waived for 2020-21 for clubs, hospitality and entertainment venues.

**WA – \$114 million Support Package for Small and Medium Businesses:** Package includes a one-off grant of \$17,500 for businesses with payrolls between \$1 million and \$4 million. One-off credit of \$2,500 for May 2020 electricity bills. Waiving of license fees for businesses in hospitality, tourism, retail and building sectors for next 12-months. Waiving of payroll tax for 4-months from 1 March 2020 for businesses with payrolls <\$7.5 million, plus an increase in the payroll tax exemption threshold from 1 July 2020. Rent for small businesses in State Government owned buildings waived until 30 September 2020.

**WA – Tourism Industry and Jobs Support Package:** \$10.4 million to provide one-off cash grants of \$6,500 to tourism operators/businesses, and a further \$4 million to provide grants of between \$25,000 to \$100,000 to operators dealing with exceptionally difficult circumstances.

**WA – Commercial Rent Relief Measures:** Grants available to commercial landlords (equivalent to 25% of 2019-20 land tax liability) who reduce rents for a minimum of 3-months. 6-month moratorium on commercial rent increases and evictions for eligible commercial tenancies.

**Tasmania – Waivers for Business Fees:** Annual fees for fisheries waived for 12-months. Fees for tourism operators waived for 3-months. 50% discount on liquor licensing fees for 2020 calendar year.

**Tasmania – Commercial Rent Relief Measures:** 6-month stop on commercial rent increases and lease terminations due to rental arrears from 1 April 2020. Landlords and tenants are obliged to negotiate rent waivers or deferrals based on tenants reduced business income. Measures applicable to businesses eligible for JobKeeper. Land tax waived for commercial landlords for 2020-21 financial year.

**Tasmania – Small Business Hardship Grant:** \$20 million to provide one-off grants of \$15,000 to severely affected businesses in hospitality, tourism, arts and seafood industries.

**Tasmania – Small and Medium Business Payroll Tax Waiver (for 2019-20 tax):** Business with payrolls up to \$5 million experiencing financial hardship can apply for a payroll tax waiver for 2019-20 liability.

**Tasmania – Youth Employment Scheme** (for new employees between April and December 2020): 1-year payroll tax rebate for businesses that employ a young person aged 24 and under between April and December 2020.

**Tasmania – Leave for Casual Workers:** 2-weeks special leave for casual government employees who are required to self-isolate.

**NT – Business Survival Grants:** Grants available to business in disproportionately affected industries, with an initial survival payment of between \$2,000 and \$50,000, and an additional payment of between \$1,000 and \$5,000.

**NT – Business Improvement Grants:** \$20 million to provide grants of \$10,000 (no contribution) or up to \$20,000 (1:1 co-contribution) for businesses to make improvements.

**NT – Payroll Tax Exemptions** (until 30 June 2021): 2-year payroll tax exemption on the wages of new employees hired up until 30 June 2021.

## Income

**Federal – Stimulus Payments to Households** (first payment from 31 March and second payment from 13 July 2020): Two separate \$750 payments to social security, veteran and other income support recipients and eligible concession card holders.

**Federal – Coronavirus Supplement for Income Support Payments** (from 27 April to 24 September 2020): Supplement paid at rate of \$550/fortnight to recipients of income support streams including JobSeeker (and all payments transitioning to JobSeeker); Youth Allowance; Parenting Payment; Austudy; ABSTUDY; Farm Household Allowance; and Special Benefits. Those eligible for the supplement will receive the full rate.

**Transitional Coronavirus Supplement for Income Support Payments** (25 September to 31 December 2020): Transitional supplement of \$250/fortnight. Eligible income support streams remain the same as that for the previous supplement, and those eligible will receive the full rate.

**Changes to Income Support Access and Requirements** (from 25 March to 24 September 2020): Expanded access to JobSeeker and Youth Allowance for Coronavirus Supplement period, and JobSeeker and Youth Allowance criteria will provide payment access for people who have lost employment. Asset testing waived for JobSeeker, Youth Allowance and Parenting Payments, and JobSeeker partner income cut-out temporarily increased. Income support waiting times waived, and simplified arrangements put in place for people to claim income support including suspended job-seeking and employment assessment requirements for JobSeekers.

**Transitional Changes to Income Support Access and Requirements:** From 25 September to 31 December 2020, increased incentives will be in place for JobSeeker and Youth Allowance recipients to take on work, including an increase to the fortnightly income recipients can earn whilst still receiving the full payment amount (from \$106 for JobKeeper and \$143 for Youth Allowance to \$300 for both), and the instalment of a single income test for both payments (60 cents for every dollar of income earned above \$300/fortnight). Asset testing and Liquid Assets Waiting Periods will be reinstated for these payments, however other waiting periods will continue to be waived until 31 December, as will increases to the partner income cut-out. From 9 June, JobSeeker work-seeking requirements will be reintroduced including no payment suspensions for failure to comply.

**Federal – Early Access to Superannuation Income** (from 20 April to 24 September 2020): Australian and New Zealand citizens and permanent residents can access up to \$10,000 of superannuation up until 1 July 2020. A further \$10,000 can be accessed between 1 July and 24 September 2020. People are eligible if they satisfy at least 1 of the following: unemployed or eligible to receive income support payments; were made redundant after 1 January 2020 or had working hours reduced by  $\geq 20\%$ ; or for sole-traders had turnover loss of  $\geq 20\%$ . Amounts withdrawn are tax-free and will not affect income support payments. Temporary visa holders unable to meet living expenses can apply for a single release of up to \$10,000 up until 1 July 2020.

**Federal – Changes to Superannuation Income Rules** (for 2019-20 and 2020-21 income years): Measures to help manage the impact of financial market volatility on Superannuation including minimum drawdown requirements for account-based pensions and similar products temporarily reduced by 50%, and upper and lower social security deeming rates reduced by 0.75 percentage points.

**NSW – Changes to Rules for Accessing Long Service Leave Income** (for 6-months from 25 March 2020 with possible extension to 1-year): 1-month notice period for employees taking long service leave income waived, and leave can be taken in shorter blocks.

**Victoria – One-off Payment for Foster and Kinship Carers:** One-off \$600 payment for foster and kinship carers for each child in their care.

**ACT – Early Access to Long Service Leave Income:** Available to workers who have experienced a loss of income (these are benefits that employees have recognised service for, but cannot currently access).

**ACT – One-off Payment to Social Housing Tenants** (delivered in June 2020): One-off \$250 payment to all social housing tenants. This is in addition to the \$750 Federal Government stimulus payment.

**SA – One-off Boost to Cost of Living Concession** (for 2020-21 concession payment period): Households on JobSeeker will receive a one-off \$500 boost to the 2020-21 Cost of Living Concession, and payments will be brought forward.

**Tasmania – One-off Payment for Foster and Kinship Carers:** One-off \$200 payment for foster and kinship carers for each young person in their care.

**Tasmania – Pandemic Isolation Assistance Grants:** One-off payment for people on low-incomes required to self-isolate including \$250 for each adult and \$125 for each child, capped at a maximum of \$1,000/household.

### Cost of Living

**Federal – National Broadband Network (NBN) COVID-19 Relief Fund:** \$50 million towards providing NBN access to low-income families with school-aged children, and a further \$50 million to internet service providers to maintain connections for financially stressed households unable to pay their bills.

**NSW – Energy Bill Payment Assistance:** Additional \$30 million for the Energy Accounts Payment Assistance Scheme, available to people having difficulty paying electricity/gas bills due to hardship.

**ACT – Rebates and Fee Increase Freeze for Household Costs:** Additional \$200 rebate for households receiving the Utilities Concession. \$150 rebate on residential rates, plus a 12-month interest-free rate deferral available to households experiencing financial hardship. Freeze on 2020-21 increases for fire and emergency services levy, vehicle registration, and public transport fees.

**Queensland – Water and Electricity Bill Rebate:** \$200 rebate for all households to offset water and electricity bills.

**WA – Rebates and Fee Increase Freeze for Household Costs:** Freeze on increases to household fees including electricity, water, motor vehicle charges, emergency services levy, and public transport. Late payment penalties waived for transfer, landholder, and vehicle licence duties and land tax. 2020-21 Energy Assistance Package payments doubled from \$300 to \$600.

**WA – Keystart Mortgage Payment Deferrals** (6-months): Keystart home loan recipients experiencing financial hardship can defer principal repayments and waive interest for up to 6-months.

**Tasmania – Freeze on Household Fees and Charges:** Freeze on Community Fire Levy for 2020-21 financial year. Public school levies for 2020 calendar year waived/refunded. Freeze on water bills for 2020-21 financial year, and cap on electricity prices

**NT – Freeze on Household Fees and Charges** (until July 2021): Freeze on Territory Government fees and charges including electricity, water, and car registration.

## EDUCATION AND TRAINING

### Early Childhood Education / Childcare

**Federal – Early Childhood Education & Care Relief Package Providing Free Child Care** (from 6 April to 12 July 2020): Federal Government will pay childcare services a weekly subsidy to continue to deliver early childhood education & care, and families will be able to access child care for free during this subsidy period. Under the temporary arrangements, the Government will provide payments equal to 50% of the childcare services' fee revenue, or 50% of the existing hourly rate cap (whichever is lower). This is in lieu of the usual Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS), subject to activity and means testing and where families pay a fee gap.

**Federal – Transitional Payments for Resumed Child Care Subsidy Arrangements** (transition period: 13 July to 27 September 2020): Under a transition period, the Federal Government will provide child care services with a subsidy equal to 25% of the services' fee revenue, or 25% of the existing hourly rate cap (whichever is lower), and regular CCS and ACCS child care subsidy arrangements will return from 13 July. Families will resume paying child care fee gaps, however services receiving transition payments cannot increase their fees during the transition period. Temporary changes to family activity tests in place from 13 July to 4 October, and families can access up to 100 hours of subsidised care for each child/fortnight if they have experienced a reduction in work hours.

**NSW – Free Community Preschool/Child Care** (for 6-months from April 2020): Additional \$51 million for 700 State-funded community preschools and mobile services, and a further \$82 million for 260 Council child care centres not eligible for JobKeeper payments. Preschool/childcare will be free for families under the funding period.

**Queensland – Free Kindergarten** (until June 2020): \$17 million to provide free community kindergarten for term 2.

### Primary and Secondary Education

**ACT – Support for Digital Education Delivery:** State Government will provide Chromebooks or similar devices to all students in school years 4–6, as well as free internet for disadvantaged families to support digital education delivery.

## Vocational Education and Training

**Federal – JobTrainer Initiative:** Two-part initiative. First part includes \$2.8 billion to provide a wage subsidy to small and medium businesses (<200 employees) to cover 50% of wages paid to apprentices and trainees, up to \$7,000/quarter for each trainee (\$28,000/year). Subsidy will be available for wages paid from January 2020 to March 2021. Second part includes \$500 million to fund an additional 340,000 free or low-cost places in short and long VET courses in areas of identified need from September 2020 (with matched funding from States/Territories).

**NSW – Free TAFE Online Courses:** 34 free short online courses available through Technical and Further Education (TAFE) NSW.

**ACT – Increased Subsidies for Vocational Education and Training:** Additional \$2 million in subsidies for apprenticeships, traineeships, and other VET students for nationally recognised training in skills across a range of industries.

**SA – Vocational Education and Training Continuity Package:** Additional \$16 million for VET training providers.

**WA – Construction Training Fund:** \$24.5 million to provide one-off payments of \$2000 to employers of existing apprentices and trainees, plus payments of between \$250 to \$500/month/apprentice to retain existing apprentices from 1 June 2020. Apprentices and trainees will receive payments of up to \$1000 to support upskilling.

**WA – Apprenticeship and Traineeship Re-engagement Incentive** (from 1 March 2020 to 30 June 2021): One-off payment to employers of \$6,000 if they hire an apprentice and \$3,000 if they hire a trainee. To be eligible for the payment, the apprentice or trainee must have had their training contract terminated on or after 1 March 2020.

**Tasmania – Small Business Grants Program for Apprenticeships and Traineeships:** Grants of \$5,000 for small businesses that hire an apprentice or trainee in tourism, building, and manufacturing industries.

**Tasmania – Rapid Response Skills Initiative:** Individuals can apply for up to \$3,000 in assistance for training, reskilling and career advice if they have recently lost work due to retrenchment, downsizing or business closure.

**Tasmania – Tourism and Hospitality Training Fund** (winter 2020): \$100,000 for training in the tourism and hospitality sectors over the winter months.

## Higher Education

**Federal – Higher Education Relief Package:** Package includes guaranteed \$18 billion in funding for 2020 for domestic students via Commonwealth Grant Scheme and HELP funding streams (regardless of falls in student enrolments). 6-month exemption from loan fees associated with FEE-HELP and VET Loans to encourage full-fee paying students to continue studies. \$47.5 million in regulatory fee relief through waived fees associated with ASQA, TEQSA and CRICOS. 6-month increased Government subsidies for remotely delivered diplomas and graduate certificates in fields of national priority, supporting approximately 20,000 places.

## NEIGHBOURHOOD AND PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

### Housing

**Federal – HomeBuilder Program** (time-limited – available for building contracts signed between 4 June and 31 December 2020): Owner occupiers can access a \$25,000 grant to build a new home or substantially renovate their existing home. Eligible works include new home constructions where the property value is ≤\$750,000, or existing home renovations where the cost of works is between \$150,000 and \$750,000 (and where the property value is ≤\$1.5 million). Home owners are eligible if they are Australian citizens and earn no more than \$125,000/year for individuals or \$200,000 for couples.

**NSW – Moratorium on Residential Rental Evictions** (interim 60-day stop till June 13, followed by 6-month restriction from June 14 2020): Interim 60-day moratorium on rental arrears evictions for tenants experiencing financial hardship (≥25% reduction in income), ending on June 13. From June 14, 6-month restriction on rental arrears evictions whereby a landlord cannot evict a tenant unless they have first attempted to negotiate a rent reduction with the tenant through a formal process, and it is 'fair and reasonable' to do so in the circumstances. Termination notice periods for ending fixed-term and periodic agreements have also been extended to 90 days during the restriction period. Landlords can still terminate a tenancy if they are suffering financial hardship, or they intend to sell the premises.

**NSW – Break Lease Measures for Fixed-term Tenancies** (6-months): Tenants experiencing financial hardship (reduction ≥25% of income) can apply to end their fixed-term tenancy if their landlord refuses to engage in negotiations for rent reduction, or an arrangement that avoids financial hardship for the tenant cannot be agreed upon.

**NSW – Land Tax Break for Landlords who Reduce Residential Rents** (for 2020 land tax liability): 25% land tax concession for residential landlords who pass on savings to tenants as rent reductions. Remaining tax liability can be deferred for 3-months.

**NSW – Extra Funding for Homelessness Prevention:** Additional \$34 million for homelessness prevention.

**Victoria – Extension of First Home Owner Grants** (until mid 2021): 12-month extension of \$20,000 First Home Owner Grants for people buying or building a new home in regional Victoria (for homes valued  $\leq$ \$750,000).

**Victoria – Moratorium on Residential Rental Evictions and Rent Increases** (for 6-months from 29 March 2020): Moratorium on rent increases and evictions for rental arrears for tenants experiencing financial hardship. Evictions can occur only if determined reasonable by Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. Tenants will not be blacklisted if unable to pay rent during the period.

**Victoria – Land Tax Rebate and Deferral for Landlords who Reduce Residential Rents** (for 2020 land tax liability): 25% reduction on 2020 land tax liability for landlords who lower rents for tenants experiencing financial hardship. Landlords claiming the concession can also defer payment of remaining 2020 tax up to 31 March 2021.

**Victoria – COVID-19 Rent Relief Grants:** One-off rent relief grant of up to \$2000 available to people experiencing financial hardship. Tenants are eligible if they have registered a revised rental agreement or gone through mediation, have  $<$ \$5,000 in savings and income  $<$ \$1,903/week, and pay  $\geq$ 30% of their income in rent. There are no citizenship or permanent residency requirements.

**Victoria – No Break Lease Fees for Ending Fixed-term Tenancies** (for 6-months from 29 March 2020): Tenants experiencing financial hardship can end a fixed-term tenancy with 14 days' notice without incurring break lease fees.

**ACT – Moratorium on Residential Rental Evictions and Rent Increases** (for 6-months from 22 April): Moratorium on rent increases and rental arrears evictions for tenants experiencing financial hardship (income reduced by  $\geq$ 25%, or member of household eligible for JobKeeper/Seeker).

**ACT – Land Tax Break for Landlords who Reduce Residential Rents:** Land tax credit for landlords who reduce rents by at least 25%. Credit equal to 50% of the rent reduction, capped at \$1,300/quarter.

**ACT – COVID-19 Support for Canberrans Facing Homelessness:** Package includes \$330,000 to increase the capacity of the homelessness services sector to respond to increased demand, and a further \$832,000 to provide both emergency and long-term accommodation for men, women and children who face challenges physical distancing in shelters, and for self-isolation and potential quarantine when needed (includes funding both across not-for-profit organisations and upgrades to existing public housing to be made available as crisis and shelter accommodation).

**Queensland – Moratorium on Residential Rental Evictions** (6-months from 29 March 2020): Moratorium on rental arrears evictions for people experiencing financial hardship (have experienced  $\geq$ 25% reduction in income, or rent constitutes  $\geq$ 30% of income).

**Queensland – Land Tax Rebate and Deferral for Landlords who Reduce Residential Rents:** 3-month rebate on 2019-20 land tax liability, and 3-month deferral for 2020-21 land tax for landlords who provide rent reductions commensurate with tax savings.

**Queensland – COVID-19 Rental Grants** (one-off): Rental grants of up to 4-weeks rent (to a maximum of \$2,000) available to tenants who have lost their job, do not have access to other financial assistance, and meet eligibility criteria including  $<$ \$10,000 in savings, have attempted to negotiate alternative payment arrangements with their landlord, and are an Australian citizen, permanent resident, or temporary visa holder.

**Queensland – Cap on Break Lease Fees for Fixed-term Tenancies** (for 6 months from 29 March 2020): 7-day cap on break lease fees for tenants who have had income reduced by at least 75% and have savings of less than \$5000.

**Queensland – Social Housing Construction Program:** \$100 million as part of the 'Works for Tradies' Initiative to construct more than 215 new social housing homes throughout 2020-21.

**Queensland – \$10 million Seniors and Accessibility Assistance:** Funding will provide grants of \$5,000 for household repairs for older Queenslanders struggling to afford necessary maintenance, repairs and accessibility improvements.

**SA – Moratorium on Residential Rental Evictions and Rent Increases** (for declared COVID-19 Emergency Period): Short-term moratorium on rent increases and rental arrears evictions for tenants experiencing financial hardship.

**SA – Land Tax Rebate for Landlords who Reduce Rents** (for 2019-20 tax liability): 25% rebate on 2019-20 land tax liability for landlords who provide tenants with rent reductions.

**WA – Moratorium on Residential Rental Evictions and Rent Increases** (for 6-months from 30 March 2020): Moratorium on rent increases and rental evictions except under circumstances where the landlord is experiencing hardship, or the tenant refuses to make a rent payment agreement. Fixed-term tenancies expiring during the period will automatically convert to periodical tenancies.

**WA – No Break Lease Fees for Ending Fixed-term Tenancies** (for 6 months from 30 March 2020): Tenants experiencing financial hardship can end a fixed-term tenancy without incurring break lease fees.

**WA – Social Housing Package:** \$319 million social housing investment that will refurbish 1,500 homes, build and purchase approximately 250 new dwellings, and deliver a regional maintenance program to 3,800 homes.

**Tasmania – Moratorium on Residential Rental Evictions and Rent Increases** (until 30 June 2020): Moratorium on rent increases and rental evictions except under circumstances where the landlord is experiencing hardship

**Tasmania – Break Lease Measures for Tenancies** (until 30 June 2020): Tenants can apply to break a fixed-term lease if its continuation would cause severe hardship.

**Tasmania – Emergency Accommodation Support:** Emergency accommodation available to people on low-incomes who need to self-isolate but are unable to stay at their place of residence or are homeless.

**Tasmania – Additional Funding for Low-income Housing** (over next 2-years): Additional \$2 million for the Private Rental Scheme to provide an extra 75 homes for social housing clients.

**Tasmania – Expansion of Safe Night Space Program:** Additional \$2.6 million to the Safe Night Space pilot program which provides support to people who are homeless or sleeping rough.

**NT – Home Improvement Scheme** (works must be completed within 3-months or by February 2021, whichever is sooner): \$100 million to provide grants of \$4,000 and \$6,000 for home improvement projects.

## Infrastructure

**Federal – Funding for Shovel Ready Projects** (funding roll out over next 6-months, from July 2020): \$1 billion infrastructure investment for shovel ready projects across the country that can support jobs immediately.

**Federal – Targeted Road Safety Works Program** (funding available for projects that can be completed in next 12-months, from July 2020): \$500 million roads investment for projects on State/Territory roads that improve road user safety.

**Federal – Local Road and Community Infrastructure (LCRI) Program:** new \$500 million funding program to support councils to deliver priority local road and community infrastructure projects across Australia.

**Federal – Bringing Forward Financial Assistance Grant Payments for Local Councils:** \$1.3 billion of the 2020-21 Financial Assistance Grant Payments brought forward to help local councils accelerate priority community infrastructure projects.

**NSW – Accelerated Infrastructure Projects:** \$500 million to bring forward capital works and maintenance, and \$250 million for accelerated maintenance and repairs on public assets such as social housing upgrades and new supply.

**NSW – Extra Funding for Local Council Loans:** Additional \$250 million to the State Government's Local Council borrowing facility to support continued viability of community infrastructure projects. Existing council loans can also be deferred for 6-months from April 2020.

**ACT – Fast-tracked Infrastructure Projects:** Fast-tracked upgrades and maintenance to public buildings and facilities including green spaces, bike paths, public schools, and installation of solar power in some social housing residences.

**Tasmania – Fast-tracked Maintenance Projects** (over the next 12-months): \$50 million to fund fast-tracking of maintenance and upgrades on public buildings.

**Tasmania – Local Government Loan Scheme** (roll-out over next 3-years): \$150 million Local Government loans scheme to upgrade tourism and other community assets.

**NT – Battery Scheme:** \$800,000 to provide grants of \$6,000 to households and business for installation of solar energy systems and batteries.

**NT – Immediate Works Program:** \$5 million to provide grants of up to \$50,000 (no contribution) or up to \$100,000 (1:1 co-contribution) for not-for-profits and community organisations to make improvements to facilities.



**COMMUNITY, LEGAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES****Social Support and Care**

**Federal – Support for Aged Care Sector:** \$444.6 million support package including: \$234.9 million for COVID-19 ‘retention bonus’ for aged care workforce – centre-based workers will receive a payment of up to \$800 for 2 quarters, and in-home care workers will receive \$600. \$78.3 million additional funding for residential care. \$26.9 million to supplement viability of residential aged care facilities including National Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Program and Multi-Purpose Services and homelessness providers. \$92.2 million in additional funding for home care providers which deliver the Commonwealth Home Support Program, including for services such as Meals on Wheels. Additional \$12.3 million for the 'My Aged Care' service which assists families to navigate and access aged care services.

**Federal – Support Measures for National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS):** Various support measures including: for participants – increase to automatic extension period for plans due to expire (from 28-days to 365). Participants can also discuss extending their NDIS plans by up to 24-months as part of their plan review. From 25 March 2020, temporary 10% increase to price limits for supports including assistance with daily life, social and community participation, and health and wellbeing activities. For providers – NDIA will provide one-off advance payment to provide cash flow relief. From 25 March 2020, increased cancellation notice period for participants to avoid paying the full fee (from 2 to 10 business days). Providers will now also be able to claim 100% of the service fee if a participant cancels at short notice.

**Federal – Community Support Package:** \$200 million in additional funding for charities and other community organisations to boost support services in emergency and crisis relief, food relief, and the national debt help hotline.

**NSW – Extra Funding for Crisis Support:** Additional \$6 million for NSW Lifeline telephone crisis support service.

**NSW – Extra Funding for Food Security Support:** Additional \$10 million to charities and community services supporting food security.

**ACT – Community Support Services Package:** Extra \$7 million in funding to support community services to provide increased crisis and food relief, and a further \$2 million to support the not-for-profit sector to deliver additional mental health and community support services.

**WA – Support Package for Community Services:** Package includes – \$159 million from WA Lotterywest funds earmarked for community recovery including crisis relief services and grants for not-for-profit and community organisations. 6-month waiver on rent for not-for-profits in State Government owned buildings from 30 March 2020. One-off \$2,500 rebate for May 2020 electricity bills for community service and charitable organisations. Guaranteed payment of contracts for community service providers until at least 30 June 2020 (even if providers are unable to meet contractual obligations).

**Tasmania – Funding Boost to Disability Support Services:** Additional \$15,000 in funding for National Disability Services Tasmania to support those with a disability navigate additional challenges caused by COVID-19.

**Family and Personal Safety**

**Federal – Domestic Violence Support:** \$150 million in additional funding for programs under the 'National Plan to reduce Violence against Women and their Children'. Programs include: counselling support for families affected by or at risk of domestic and family violence; tele-counselling support services (1800RESPECT and Mensline Australia); the Trafficked People Program supporting victims of human trafficking, forced marriage, and slavery-like practices; and support programs for women and children experiencing violence to stay in their homes, or a home of their choice, when it is safe to do so. Federal Government will work with the States/Territories to deliver the funding.

**NSW – Additional Help for Domestic Violence Victims and Survivors:** \$21 million in additional funding (\$12.8 million from the NSW Government and \$8.8 million from the Federal Government) to boost the capacity of domestic violence support services including: frontline specialist domestic violence services; the 24/7 NSW Domestic Violence Line for crisis counselling and support referrals; Legal Aid’s NSW Domestic Violence hotline; the Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services; and targeted responses for especially vulnerable groups including Aboriginal communities, people with a disability, people living in rural areas, and LGBTIQ communities.

**Victoria – Children and Families Safety Package** (funding roll-out over next 2-years): Additional \$77.5 million to support at-risk children and families including increased capacity of support services and frontline workers, and expansion of the Home Stretch Program which assists young adults in residential care transition to independent living.

**ACT – Responding to Domestic and Family Violence:** \$550,000 in additional funding to respond to increased demand for domestic and family violence and sexual assault support services, and to provide emergency accommodation to women, children and families experiencing domestic and family violence.

**Queensland – \$5.5 million to Boost Domestic Violence Services during COVID-19 Pandemic:** funding will expand the capacity of domestic and family violence support services including 24/7 state wide crises services, crisis accommodation, and specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services.

**WA – Legislation Amendments to Protect Family Violence Victims during COVID-19:** Amendments to State legislation including allowing courts to impose electronic monitoring for family violence offenders; improved access to restraining orders and option to lodge applications online; and ability for Family and Children’s Courts to issue interim restraining orders on an ex parte basis.

**Tasmania – Young People and Families Safety and Wellbeing Package:** Additional \$2.7 million for family violence prevention including rapid rehousing and support services, and a further \$2.5 million for child safety and wellbeing including additional support services for foster, kinship and residential carers, and supporting IT access for young people in care.

### Arts, Culture and Leisure

**Federal – JobMaker Package for the Creative Economy** (funding will roll out over 12-months from June 2020): \$250 million package to support restarting of the creative economy and those in cultural and creative industries. Package includes: \$75 million for the RISE Fund to provide capital to put on new festivals, concerts and events. \$90 million in Show Starter Loans to stimulate arts job creation. \$50 million for Screen Australia to support local film and television. And up to \$35 million to sector-significant businesses and organisations.

**Victoria – Survival Package to Help Save the Arts:** Package includes \$13 million Strategic Investment Fund shared by 100 non-government arts and cultural organisations, and a further \$2.2 million Sustaining Creative Workers fund to provide grants of \$5,000 for individual artists and \$10,000 for small Arts organisations and businesses.

**Victoria – Support for sport and recreation bodies:** \$40 million in funding for community sport and recreation bodies including associations and clubs, and a further \$16 million for State sporting organisations.

**ACT – Support for the Arts Sector:** \$500,000 in funding to provide grants of up to \$10,000 to artists to support viability over the next 6–9 months. A further \$500,000 to Arts facilities to waive fees for sub-licenses.

**Queensland – Arts and Cultural Recovery Package:** \$22.5 million 2-year recovery package for Queensland’s Arts and cultural sector. Provides a range of sector supports including: offsetting revenue losses and stabilising businesses; funding a pipeline of performing arts and live music; and supporting partnerships with local councils, venues, artists, festivals and organisations

**WA – COVID-19 Arts Package:** \$1.5 million funding package to provide \$2,000 grants to all living WA Artists represented in the State Art Collection to create an online collection archive, and a \$525,000 targeted acquisition program to purchase works from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists.

**Tasmania – Support for the Arts:** \$1.5 million in funding for grants and operational support for Arts and cultural sector.

### HEALTH CARE

**Federal – Primary Health Care Support Package:** Primary health care support package including – \$100 million to fund new Medicare service for bulk-billed telehealth consultations from 13 March 2020 available for GP, specialist and allied health services, and to people including those required to self-isolate; people aged ≥70; people with chronic diseases; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples aged ≥50; people who are immunocompromised; pregnant women; and parents with babies. \$25 million for home medicines services to enable vulnerable groups to have prescriptions filled remotely and home delivered. \$50.7 million to expand the national triage phone line to operate 24/7 and provide access to GPs over the phone. \$206.7 million for up to 100 respiratory clinics, plus \$170.2 million for Medicare-funded bulk-billed COVID-19 tests.

**Federal – Support for More Mental Health Services:** Additional \$74 million towards mental health support services including a Government digital mental health portal 'Head to Health' to provide a single authoritative information source; a new national mental health communications campaign; \$10 million to create a dedicated Coronavirus wellbeing support line; and \$14 million to bolster the capacity of mental health support providers.

**NSW – Additional Hospital Funding:** Additional \$700 million for respiratory clinics, increased acute care capacity, and extra medical equipment such as ventilators.

**Victoria – Health System Funding Boost:** Additional \$437 million for increased acute care services capacity, extra medical equipment such as respirators and personal protective equipment, and increased public health capacity for COVID-19 tracing and monitoring.

**ACT – Additional Funding for Health Care** (to 30 June 2020): Additional \$126 million for respiratory clinics, increased acute care services capacity, extra medical equipment, and increased capacity for public health services including COVID-19 tracing.

**Queensland – Additional Funding for Health Services:** Additional \$1.2 billion for fever clinics, increased capacity for acute care services, and aeromedical services for regional and remote communities.

**WA – Additional Funding for Health Services:** Additional \$500 million for health and other frontline service delivery and extra medical equipment.

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**Tasmania – Primary Healthcare Grants:** Extra \$5 million in funding to provide grants of up to \$10,000 to general practices and community pharmacists to support delivery of primary health care services.

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**Tasmania – Technology Grants for Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Services:** \$450,000 in funding to provide service providers with grants of up to \$20,000 to purchase technology to continue to deliver services remotely.

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ACT: Australian Capital Territory; NSW: New South Wales; NT: Northern Territory; SA: South Australia; WA: Western Australia

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# CONTACT US

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