



Friday 3 April 2020

## **UPDATE ON CORONAVIRUS MEASURES**

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

Australia has one of the most rigorous coronavirus testing systems in the world with more than 270,000 tests completed.

It is clear the epidemiology curve is beginning to flatten but it is too early to determine whether such movements will be significant or sustained.

Federal Member for Robertson, Lucy Wicks said “ I want to thank those throughout the community who have acted responsibly towards their fellow Australians and have been undertaking social distancing and isolation measures. These measures are helping to slow the spread of the virus, ensure the strength of our health system and save lives.”

Australia was now in the suppression phase of the response, which will last for some time. Restrictions will be reviewed regularly and planning for the medium to long-term has begun.

Governments will continue to work together to increase supplies of personal protective equipment such as masks, hand sanitiser and gloves. New supplies for the National Medical Stockpile are continuing to be sourced from overseas suppliers and domestic manufacturers.

In addition to this there were a number of announcements made around Religious Services. Churches and other places of worship, will be considered places of work so that services can be live streamed to the community. This will ensure that religious services, including Easter services, remain accessible to congregations.

“Providing access to services is important for a sense of continuity and social connection. Services may be conducted and live streamed providing only essential staff are present, the venue remains closed to the public, and social distancing principles are adhered to.” Ms Wicks said.

Any church wishing to conduct religious services, including Easter services, must use the minimum number of participants required to deliver and live stream the service, which may include a priest, attendants, organist, videographer and sound recordist.



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

“It is important that those throughout our community remember social distancing must continue over Easter, Australians should stay at home over this Easter and not undertake unnecessary holiday travel.” Ms Wicks said.

Further progress on the issue of commercial tenancies was also announced. An agreement that a mandatory code of conduct guided by certain principles will be developed and subsequently legislated by State and Territory Governments to apply for tenancies where the tenant is eligible for the Commonwealth Government’s JobKeeper assistance and is a small- or medium-sized enterprise.

The principles that guide the code will be:

- Where it can, rent should continue to be paid, and where there is financial distress as a result of COVID-19 (for example, the tenant is eligible for assistance through the JobKeeper program), tenants and landlords should negotiate a mutually agreed outcome
- There will be a proportionality to rent reductions based on the decline in turnover to ensure that the burden is shared between landlords and tenants
- There will be a prohibition on termination of leases for non-payment of rent (lockouts and eviction)
- There will be a freeze on rent increases (except for turnover leases)
- There will be a prohibition on penalties for tenants who stop trading or reduce opening hours
- There will be a prohibition on landlords passing land tax to tenants (if not already legislated)
- There will be a prohibition on landlords charging interest on unpaid rent
- There will be a prohibition on landlords from making a claim to a bank guarantee or security deposit for non-payment of rent
- Ensure that any legislative barriers or administrative hurdles to lease extensions are removed (so that a tenant and landlord could agree a rent waiver in return for a lease extension)

For landlords and tenants that sign up to the code of conduct, States and Territories have agreed to look at providing the equivalent of at least a three month land tax waiver and three month land tax deferral on application for eligible landowners, with jurisdictions to continue to monitor the situation.

The proposed code of conduct will be discussed at the next meeting of the National Cabinet on Tuesday 7 April.

For the most up-to-date information surrounding the Coronavirus, go to [Australia.gov.au](https://australia.gov.au).

**MEDIA:**

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