

NECA MEMBER COVID-19 UPDATE

LATEST FEDERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. NATIONAL CABINET UPDATE

The National Cabinet met on 25 March 2020 to discuss enhanced health measures to support the nations efforts to fight coronavirus, the following was agreed:

Expansion of coronavirus testing criteria

It was agreed to expand the current coronavirus testing criteria to include testing people with fever or acute respiratory infection in:

- all health workers
- all aged/residential care workers
- geographically localised areas where there is elevated risk of community transmission as defined by the local public health unit
- where no community transmission is occurring, high risk settings where there are two or more plausibly-linked cases, for example:
 - aged and residential care
 - rural and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
 - detention centres/correctional facilities
 - boarding schools
 - military bases (including Navy ships) that have live-in accommodation.

It was also agreed that testing will be expanded to include hospitalised patients with fever and acute respiratory symptoms of unknown cause, at the discretion of the treating clinician. This is the minimum testing criteria. States and Territories have the discretion to expand their own criteria for testing if they have capacity.

Temporary suspension of all semi-urgent elective surgery

It was agreed to suspend all non-urgent elective surgery.

National Cabinet also agreed that States and Territories will continue to work with private hospital groups to ensure they can support efforts to protect Australians against coronavirus.

Nationally consistent public directions on self-isolation for individuals

National Cabinet agreed to implement nationally consistent public health directions on self-quarantine for individuals diagnosed with coronavirus.

Further measures

National Cabinet will consider the need for any further measures at their next meeting on 27 March 2020.

2. NATIONAL COVID-19 COORDINATION COMMISSION

The Federal Government have announced the creation of the National COVID-19 Coordination Commission (Commission). The Commission is tasked to coordinate advice to the Australian Government on actions to anticipate and mitigate the economic and social effects of the global coronavirus pandemic.

Mr Neville Power has been appointed Chairman and brings both high level business expertise and a strong commitment to social issues. An Executive Board of Commissioners will advise the Prime Minister on all non-health aspects of the pandemic response. The Board will work in tandem with the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Brendan Murphy, who continues to lead the Commonwealth's health response.

The Commission Executive Board includes leaders across the private and not-for-profit sectors: Mr Greg Combet AM, Ms Jane Halton AO, Mr Paul Little AO, Ms Catherine Tanna and Mr David Thodey AO (Deputy Chair). They will be joined by the Secretaries of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Mr Philip Gaetjens and Home Affairs, Mr Mike Pezzullo.

3. ATO RELEASES 'ONE-STOP-SHOP' FOR ESSENTIAL TAX AND SUPERANNUATION INFORMATION ON COVID-19 STIMULUS MEASURES

The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) has updated its website with essential information about tax and superannuation changes that have now become law following the passage of the Government's Economic Support Package through the Parliament.

The ATO's Coronavirus page provides easy-to-understand and detailed information about what people need to know or do in order to get access to the tax or superannuation measures as announced by the Government as part of its economic response to COVID-19.

Measures include:

- giving individuals early access to their superannuation
- providing cash flow assistance for employers
- increasing the instant asset write-off, making more businesses eligible
- backing business investment by accelerating depreciation deductions.

More information: www.ato.gov.au/coronavirus

4. AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TEXT MESSAGE REGARDING CORONAVIRUS PREVENTION STEPS

Starting from 24 March 2020, every Australian mobile phone will be sent a text message from the Federal Government with important steps each person can take to protect their own health, the health of their families and the health of the whole community from the coronavirus.

Text messages will continue to be used as one of the range communications from the government to the Australian people, to reinforce the importance of abiding by new restrictions and social distancing to save lives.

LATEST STATE AND TERRITORY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Contact your local NECA Chapter website for regular updates.