

MEDIA STATEMENT

*08 May 2020
Prime Minister*

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

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

There have been 6,899 confirmed cases in Australia and sadly 97 people have died. There are now only around 1,000 active cases in Australia, and over the past week, daily infection rates have remained low. Testing remains high, with more than 730,000 tests undertaken in Australia.

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

National Cabinet again encouraged Australians to download the COVIDSafe app to ensure that we can protect Australians and reset baseline restrictions. More than 5.3 million Australians have already downloaded the COVIDSafe app. This is an enormous achievement, but more is needed.

National Cabinet will meet again on Friday 15 May 2020.

Re-opening a COVID-safe Australia and economy

The National Cabinet met today to finalise the three-step plan to gradually remove baseline restrictions and make Australia COVID-safe.

Australia has so far been highly successful in 'flattening the curve'. The number of new COVID-19 cases in Australia each day is very low. We can now begin to take careful steps to ease some of the restrictions that have helped us suppress the spread of this virus.

We are confidently and cautiously taking the first step to lifting restrictions. Our success so far means we have slowed the spread of COVID-19 and built the capacity in our health system to manage the impact of the virus. We can now start to progressively ease the restrictions we have in place. The AHPPC has provided strong advice on the conditions that must be met as we establish COVID safe ways of working and living so that we can reopen parts of the economy in the safest possible way while living with COVID-19. This means that many Australians can start getting out to the shops, undertaking some local trips and travel, visiting playgrounds and public parks, and having friends and family around with a bit more freedom.

But the National Cabinet is very clear: continued suppression of COVID-19 is about collective action. Success depends on maintaining our new community norms – physical distancing, good hygiene practices and downloading the COVIDSafe app to keep us all safe while we are out and about.

For businesses, this also means taking the time to prepare and develop a plan to operate in a COVID safe way to protect their customers and workers. With every one of us playing our part, we should all feel safe and confident in leaving the house and starting to do some of the things we've missed in the last few months – like getting back to work, having a quick bite in a restaurant or cafe, attending auctions and open houses, and participating in group exercise.

Each step we take needs to be underpinned by a strong commitment from all of us to:

- stay 1.5 metres away from other people whenever and wherever we can
- maintain good hand washing and cough/sneeze hygiene
- stay home when we're unwell, and getting tested if we have respiratory symptoms or a fever,
- download the COVIDSafe app so we can find the virus quickly, and
- Develop COVID safe plans for workplaces and plans.

Our success depends on us making these behaviours part of our daily lives during the COVID-19 pandemic to keep us COVID safe.

Australian governments are taking a measured approach. Our three-step plan provides a pathway for jurisdictions to move towards COVID safe communities in a way that best suits their individual circumstances. States and territories are able to move between the steps on the pathway at different times, in line with their current public health situation and local conditions. They'll need to maintain steady case numbers and be able to rapidly contain outbreaks, which we're set to do - with our enhanced testing regime, strengthened health surge capacity, and improved ability to quickly identify people who may have been exposed to the virus.

For each of the major areas of restrictions we have set out three key steps between where we are now and where we want to be.

- Step 1 will focus on carefully reopening the economy, and giving Australians opportunities to return to work and social activities, including gatherings of up to 10 people, up to 5 visitors in the family home and some local and regional travel
- Step 2 builds on this with gatherings of up to 20, and more businesses reopening, including gyms, beauty services and entertainment venues like galleries and cinemas.
- Step 3 will see a transition to COVID safe ways of living and working, with gatherings of up to 100 people permitted. Arrangements under step

3 will be the 'new normal' while the virus remains a threat. International travel and mass gatherings over 100 people will remain restricted.

A [detailed plan of the steps \(PDF 174 KB\)](#), as well as a [summary \(PDF 175 KB\)](#), is attached.

Under the three-step plan, states and territories continue to make decisions to their individual circumstances and local conditions.

Jurisdictions may ease restrictions at a different pace. Individuals and business should look to local authorities for the most up to date information, or visit www.australia.gov.au to be linked to state and territory resources.

Special arrangements will need to be continued in Indigenous biosecurity areas and for vulnerable groups.

National Cabinet also committed – as part of the three-step plan – to regular reviews and stocktake assessments of our progress every three weeks. We will be closely monitoring the situation as restrictions are eased. This will enable us to assess the impact of changes, track progress against our agreed precedent conditions, determine the pace of moving through the steps, and make any further decisions. The AHPPC and National Cabinet were very firm on this. We are prepared for an increase in case numbers or possible outbreaks, but relapse should not be an option. A second wave is not something we can afford to go through. The cost to our people, our economy, our social fabric, is too high. We should look to build success in each step, and move forward safely and with confidence.

So long as Australians keep living and working in a COVID safe way, we'll be able to keep case numbers low and continue taking steps on the pathway to relaxing more restrictions.

National Cabinet's goal is to have a sustainable COVID safe Australia in July 2020. We've shown what we can achieve when we work together - we flattened the curve. Now, let's work together to get Australia COVID safe.