

About the HSHPIC COVID-19 Response Group Meeting

During these unprecedented times, vulnerable communities are at higher risk of illness, poverty, violence and disadvantage and the community sector is facing high demand, and workforce, safety and sustainability challenges.

VCOSS and DHHS have agreed to bring together community sector peak bodies and government in an expanded HSHPIC to strengthen engagement and planning around the COVID-19 response and recovery.

The HSHPIC COVID-19 Response Group is meeting fortnightly. A meeting summary will be published following each meeting.

What was discussed this week?

Personal Protective Equipment

Requests for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are now centrally managed and triaged by the DHHS.

Requests for PPE can be made by residential care providers, Supported Residential Services providers, disability group homes, crisis and congregate residential homelessness services and other care settings.

Access to PPE is still being prioritised for facilities, programs and carers where there has been a confirmed case of COVID-19 or there is a reasonable likelihood someone will test positive, although supply is increasing. PPE is generally not being released for precautionary purposes.

State Relief and Recovery Team update

The State Relief and Recovery Team is meeting multiple times each week. They have identified key principles for recovery and most-affected cohorts, and are putting in place a coordinated and staged approach to recovery activities and programs. Key relief activities they are planning for include:

- Emergency Food Relief
- Psychosocial Support and Outreach
- Accommodation
- Health and Medical
- Transport

VCOSS is working with the State Relief and Recovery Team, and will work with the emergency relief sector more broadly, to develop a model for food relief that recognises the existing capacity and capabilities, and supports the sustainability, of the emergency relief sector.

This will help to prevent duplication, leverage the skills, assets and resources of existing emergency relief organisations, utilise the local relationships, networks and trust that these organisations enjoy, and support the sector in a time of crisis.

Update on accommodation

DHHS are working to address two broad accommodation issues including:

- When people in the community are exposed to COVID-19 and cannot safely self-isolate in their current accommodation without posing an infection risk to other household members or care workers; or if carer is diagnosed or exposed and can no longer provide a care placement for a period of time.
- To help people whose accommodation options are impacted by the social restrictions including rough sleepers, and addressing an anticipated spike in family violence incidents.

Work is also underway to plan for further contingencies if more widespread outbreaks occur and sector contingency plans are unable to meet demand.

Several major announcements were made in the last week, related to [pop-up facilities for people experiencing homelessness](#), [short-term accommodation for people escaping family violence](#) and [hotel accommodation for healthcare workers](#) exposed to COVID-19.

DHHS acknowledged there were existing pressures on housing and accommodation supply before the COVID-19 emergency, and the recent announcements about emergency accommodation will not resolve these longer-term structural challenges.

Overview of the impact of the announcement of the Crisis Council of Cabinet

DHHS advised a [Crisis Council of Cabinet \(CCC\)](#) has been established by the Premier as the core decision making forum for the Victorian Government on all matters related to the coronavirus emergency, including implementing the outcomes of the National Cabinet.

Eight core coordinating mechanisms have been put in place across government. These include:

1. Health emergency
2. Economic emergency
3. Economic program delivery, supply, logistics and procurement
4. Continuity of essential services (people)
5. Continuity of essential services (economic)
6. Economic recovery (private sector)
7. Restoration of public services (people)
8. Restoration of public services – economic (public sector).

These mechanisms are each being led by a Departmental Secretary. Associate Secretaries have been appointed to manage the day-to-day administration of departments.

Advice on the status of contracts lapsing June 30, 2020

Many services have contracts lapsing at the end of June. The Department of Treasury and Finance provided an update on the budget process. Given the State Budget has been tentatively rescheduled to October, a six-month Supply Bill that provides authority for government spending in the interim period between 30 June 2020 the commencement of the State Budget is due to be considered by Parliament next week.

Subject to the six-month Supply Bill is passed by Parliament, government will provide advice on funding for relevant lapsing contracts.

In the meantime, community organisations should speak with their DHHS Sector Leads about which contracts are impacted.

[Working for Victoria update \(not discussed at the meeting\)](#)

The [Working for Victoria Fund](#) is a job creation program. It is designed to help workers who have lost jobs as a consequence of COVID-19 - and other Victorians seeking work - to find new opportunities in critical roles supporting the community.

Community sector organizations can now register job opportunities on the [Working for Victoria website](#). They will then be matched with job seekers who fit their requirements. The Victorian Government will pay each worker's salary plus on-costs for six months.

About 20,000 Victorians have now registered as job seekers.

Some large organisations have already been directly invited to submit proposals, but others can do so at any time.

VCOSS can help community organizations identify and design job opportunities. VCOSS will also work with community sector peaks to identify sector-specific and cross-sector opportunities.

[Education system update](#)

Term two commenced yesterday. The key message to families is if children can learn from home, they must learn from home. About 3% of students attended school on-site yesterday.

The Department of Education and Training recognised it is important that some children be able to attend if they are at risk when at home. They are working to support regions and schools to identify children who might be facing elevated risk of violence and abuse at home.

Schools have also been working hard to identify need for devices at home. There is a priority of access list, including children in out of home care, in youth justice and year 11 and 12 students experiencing economic disadvantage.

Tailored advice is being developed for specialist schools.

Links and resources and information

The [DHHS Funded Agency Channel](#) is a central source of information. It includes new information about:

- [Requests or Personal Protective Equipment](#)
- During the COVID-19 emergency, [DHHS will adopt a flexible approach](#) to monitoring funded agencies
- [Changes to COVID-19 testing criteria](#) that apply to community services staff and clients

Kind regards,

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You can learn more about HSHPIC [here](#).