

COVID-19 Response Timeline (Abridged)

MARCH

There are 65 days between the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Australia and the JobSeeker scheme announcement and implementation. Prior to the announcement of JobSeeker, economic, employment and health system stimulus packages totalling more than \$95 billion are announced by Australian governments, most of which are in the 16 days between 11-27 March. COVID-19 cases in Australia reach 3000 by 27 March.

- **1 MARCH**, first death from COVID-19 in Australia
- **2 MARCH**, first case reported in TAS. QLD Government defers payroll tax for SMBs.
- **4 MARCH**, first case reported in NT.
- **11 MARCH**, SA Government announces \$350m stimulus package.
- **12 MARCH**, \$17.6bn national stimulus package announced by Australian Government. First reported case in ACT.
- **15 MARCH**, gatherings of more than 500 people cancelled/forbidden (Australia wide).
- **16 MARCH**, VIC & ACT declare State of/Public Emergency. WA announces \$607m package to support households and SMBs.
- **17 MARCH**, NSW announces \$2.3bn health/economic stimulus package. QLD announce \$500m loan facility and extension of payroll tax waiver to all businesses. TAS announces \$420m business support package.
- **18 MARCH**, indoor gatherings of more than 100 people 'recommended to be banned'. NT announces \$65m Jobs Rescue and Recovery Plan.
- **19 MARCH**, Australian border closure announced. QANTAS suspends 60% of domestic flights, places two-thirds of staff on leave. VIC announces \$437m boost to health system.
- **20 MARCH**, Australian border closes to all non-citizens/residents. TAS border closes. Newstart Allowance renamed to JobSeeker Payment. ACT announces \$137m economic survival package.
- **21 MARCH**, VIC announces \$1.7bn economic survival and jobs package. National 'social distancing rules' implemented.
- **22-23 MARCH**, all states announce shutdown of all non-essential activity within 48 hours. Australian Government announces second economic stimulus package (\$66.1bn).
- **24 MARCH**, SA closes its borders. QLD announces \$4bn economic support package.
- **25 MARCH**, QLD restricts border access, announces first COVID-19 death.
- **27 MARCH**, hotel quarantine scheme announced. \$1bn 'Working for NSW' scheme announced.
- **30 MARCH**, JobKeeper scheme announced and starts immediately. VIC stage 3 restrictions announced. NT \$5m 'Working & Wellbeing Fund' introduced.

January & February

COVID-19 is detected in Australia for the first time, 44 days since the first case is detected in Wuhan, China. The restriction on arrivals from mainland China has an instant impact as the QLD Government provides \$30m+ in support for businesses reliant on tourism.

- **25 JANUARY**, first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Australia (VIC). First case in NSW reported.
- **29 JANUARY**, first reported case in QLD.
- **30 JANUARY**, 9 cases in Australia, 98 cases now declared in 18 countries.
- **1 FEBRUARY**, foreign arrivals from mainland China not allowed entry into Australia (except citizens or residents). First reported case in SA.
- **4 FEBRUARY**, QLD Government announces \$3.67m relief package for tourism operators at Cairns Marina.
- **18 FEBRUARY**, QLD Government announces \$27.25m aid package for international tourism promotion.

APRIL

April sees a marked increase in spending for mental health support as pandemic/lockdown impacts are felt, with VIC and NSW governments announcing \$136m+ in funding to support mental health and wellbeing services. VIC also announces funding to support the creative arts. The COVIDSafe app is launched.

- **1 APRIL**, VIC announces \$50m Agricultural Workforce Plan and \$1.3bn health system boost.
- **2 APRIL**, QLD further tightens border restrictions.
- **3 APRIL**, NSW adds \$750m to Small Business Support Fund.
- **5 APRIL**, VIC announces \$45m support for kindergarten providers.
- **8 APRIL**, NT announces additional \$180m for Rescue and Recovery Plan.
- **9 APRIL**, QLD introduces series of rent support measures, underpinned by \$400m in land tax relief.
- **12 APRIL**, VIC extends state of emergency by four weeks, provides \$59.4m boost for mental health services.
- **16 APRIL**, ATO publishes JobSeeker guidance for sole traders. NT announces second state of Small Business Survival Fund, including \$20m to help cover businesses operational costs.
- **17 APRIL**, Australian Government announces nbn assistance for families and SMBs, worth \$150m.
- **20-21 APRIL**, NSW announces additional \$14m for 'Business Connect' and \$95.7m to keep casual and temporary school staff engaged during pandemic.
- **22 APRIL**, economic impact modelling released by VIC Government suggests unemployment may reach 11% by September 2020, 270k jobs lost. Property prices could fall by 9% by Dec 2020.
- **24 APRIL**, NSW confirm \$73m funding package to support mental health and wellbeing services.
- **26 APRIL**, COVIDSafe app launched. \$16.8m package to support the creative arts (VIC) and \$395m stimulus package to support local councils (NSW) announced.
- **27-28 APRIL**, Coronavirus Supplement of \$550 for those on income support commences. First cash flow boost payments delivered to eligible businesses.

MAY

Notable government spending to support the badly affected arts and cultural areas, with \$200m allocated by VIC and NSW alone. Encouraging signs across ACT, NSW and NT as restrictions continue to be eased throughout the month (and into early June).

- **1-3 MAY**, some easing of movement and visiting restrictions in ACT, NSW and NT.
- **6 MAY**, ACT confirms additional \$4.5m in support for mental health services.
- **11-13 MAY**, VIC announces easing of some COVID-19 restrictions, \$150m 'Experience Economy Survival Package' and \$3.7m in support for people experiencing hardship managing energy bills.
- **15 MAY**, further easing of restrictions in ACT, NSW and NT.
- **22 MAY**, \$60bn JobSeeker miscalculation announced.
- **25 MAY**, NSW announces \$50m 'Rescue and Restart' package for not-for-profit arts and cultural organisations.
- **26 MAY**, JobMaker plan announced by Federal Government.
- **27 MAY**, Rydges on Swanston 'hotel outbreak' identified by DHSS, cluster of 17 people.
- **29 MAY**, Canberra's 'Recovery Plan' commences with a further easing of capacity restrictions in cafés and similar.
- **31 MAY**, Stage of Emergency in VIC extended by further three weeks. 7195 total cases in Australia with 103 deaths.

JULY

The JobKeeper scheme is extended. Parts of Melbourne enter a second lockdown, with cases per day in Australia peaking on 30 July (VIC provided 694 of the 721 cases). By end of July there have been 1.62m recipients of JobSeeker.

- **1 JULY**, ten postcode areas in Melbourne locked down and return to Stage 3 Stay at Home restrictions. NSW announces further payroll tax reduction. JobMaker plan starts.
- **6 JULY**, NSW and VIC announce interstate border closure.
- **9 JULY**, Melbourne and Mitchell Shire re-enter lockdown for six weeks.
- **21 JULY**, JobKeeper extension announced.

JUNE

Support for the arts continues including a Federal Government rescue package. The Melbourne hotel quarantine fallout continues, including confirmation of an enquiry into the control breach on 30 June.

- **1 JUNE**, easing of restrictions in NSW with more to follow on 10th, 13th, 15th June.
- **9 JUNE**, 'Jobs for Canberrans' fund expanded to \$28m, NSW announces \$750m loan guarantee scheme for universities.
- **10 JUNE**, IR working groups membership announced.
- **15 JUNE**, NSW announces \$27.3m recovery package for local sporting clubs and organisations.
- **16 JUNE**, VIC confirms \$23m support to help develop culturally safe responses to COVID-19.
- **17 JUNE**, DHSS confirms Stamford Plaza hotel outbreak cluster now 46 people.
- **19 JUNE**, minimum wage(s) increased by 1.75%.
- **21 JUNE**, VIC State of Emergency extended for further four weeks.
- **22 JUNE**, NT and Australian Government announce joint investment of \$53m to support infrastructure construction jobs.
- **24 JUNE**, ACT confirm \$1m support for nine arts organisations, Australian Government confirms \$250m rescue package for the arts.

AUGUST

Melbourne enters its second lockdown and State of Disaster declared in Victoria; Premier Andrews continues to poll well. Further creative industry support announced at a Federal level.

- **2 AUGUST**, Victoria enters a State of Disaster, Melbourne moves to Stage 4 restrictions and an overnight curfew is introduced for at least six weeks.
- **6 AUGUST**, Federal Childcare Support Package begins.
- **12 AUGUST**, a Herald Sun poll shows that 68% of responders think Premier Andrews has "done a good job during the pandemic". A Guardian poll shows 72% of respondents support the restrictions in place.
- **31 AUGUST**, 'RISE' fund grant opportunity commences, for companies in arts and entertainment sectors (via Australian Government).

SEPTEMBER

JobKeeper to continue but at lower rates in both Tiers 1 and 2. The Melbourne lockdown and curfew continue but 'Roadmap to Recovery' announcement presents a path to normality.

- **2 SEPTEMBER**, JobKeeper extension announced.
- **6 SEPTEMBER**, VIC 'Roadmap to Recovery' announced, Melbourne lockdown to continue throughout September.
- **18 SEPTEMBER**, IR formal working group meetings conclude. Third round of VIC Business Support Fund opens (offering grants to SMBs).
- **28 SEPTEMBER**, JobKeeper extension 2 commences, payments now at the lower rate.

NOVEMBER

A positive start to the month with no locally acquired cases in the country, a small outbreak in Adelaide however results in a 'circuit breaker' lockdown imposed at short notice. JobKeeper extension 2 is announced.

- **1 NOVEMBER**, no newly acquired cases in Australia.
- **8 NOVEMBER**, the VIC 'ring of steel' is lifted with assorted other restrictions lifted.
- **16-21 NOVEMBER**, 17 cases in Adelaide results in the introduction of significant restrictions which are subsequently lifted early when contact tracing clarifies the situation.
- **22 NOVEMBER**, VIC moves to 'Last Step' of road to recovery.
- **30 NOVEMBER**, JobKeeper extension announced (covering 4 Jan to 28 March).

JANUARY 2021

The Australian Government vaccine information campaign is launched on the back of the TGA's approval of the Pfizer vaccine, with Perth entering a 5-day circuit breaker lockdown a couple of days later. The reduction in JobKeeper payments as part of extension 2 kicks in.

- **4 JANUARY**, JobKeeper extension 2 commences (at decreased payment rates for both tiers)
- **8 JANUARY**, Greater Brisbane enters 3-day lockdown.
- **10-11 JANUARY**, Northern Beaches restrictions lifted, most Greater Brisbane restrictions lifted.
- **25 JANUARY**, TGA provisionally approves Pfizer vaccine.
- **31 JANUARY**, 5-day lockdown announced for Perth and some surrounding areas.

OCTOBER

Signs of a way out of the pandemic appear in the provisional determinations of two potential vaccines, and Victoria recording zero new cases. Federal Government introduces support for apprentice/trainee schemes, commercial rent relief and a hold on commercial and residential for those unable to meet their commitments due to the impact of COVID-19.

- **1 OCTOBER**, apprentice/trainee wage subsidy scheme for medium size business opens, phase two of SME Guarantee Scheme commences (both Australian Government).
- **9 & 14 OCTOBER**, TGA grants provisional determination for AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccines.
- **19 OCTOBER**, Australian Government announces relief for commercial tenants (including a hold on evictions).
- **26 OCTOBER**, VIC records zero new COVID-19 cases or deaths.
- **28 OCTOBER**, Melbourne moves up to Stage 3 restrictions.

DECEMBER

The Northern Beaches outbreak results in a lockdown that lasts until the second week of January. Melbourne 61-straight days of zero locally acquired cases. JobMaker Hiring Credit scheme registration opens, but claims can't be made until February. The 909th death from COVID-19 occurs, the last to-date in Australia.

- **6 DECEMBER**, registration for the JobMaker Hiring Credit scheme opens to employers.
- **9 DECEMBER**, IR Reforms and Fair Work Act Bill are introduced to Parliament.
- **12-14 DECEMBER**, QLD opens its borders to NZ. NZ announces plans are approved for quarantine free travel bubble with Australia in first quarter of 2021.
- **16 DECEMBER**, ABS publishes 'Business Indicators, Business Impacts of COVID-19'.
- **19 DECEMBER**, NSW public health order locks down the Northern Beaches area of Sydney.
- **30 DECEMBER**, Melbourne records 61 days of zero locally acquired cases.
- **31 DECEMBER**, additional Coronavirus Supplement ceases.