

Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier



Sunday, 5 April 2020

SUPPORTING WORKERS ON THE FRONTLINE OF CORONAVIRUS FIGHT

Hospital workers and paramedics on the front line of Victoria's coronavirus response will get access to free accommodation if they need to self-isolate.

Premier Daniel Andrews and Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos announced today that hospital workers who test positive for coronavirus, and those that have had unanticipated and unprotected contact with a person suspected of having coronavirus, will be put up in hotels or apartments to self-isolate free of charge.

The move will allow our healthcare workers to keep their families or housemates safe, without the financial burden of taking on extra rent. This is particularly important for those who live with other healthcare workers or members of vulnerable cohorts – including people over 65, people who are immunosuppressed or have an underlying chronic condition, pregnant women, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Healthcare workers are currently more likely to be diagnosed with coronavirus than any other workforce and are at greater risk of coming into close contact with someone with the virus.

The accommodation will be available to clinical and non-clinical staff – including cooks and cleaners – at public and private hospitals that directly engage with patients, as well as frontline paramedics and patient transport staff.

The Department of Health and Human Services is currently assessing a range of hotels and apartment buildings in Melbourne and throughout regional Victoria that could provide accommodation, to ensure they're appropriately located and set up to house people who are isolating – so no one else in the building is put at risk.

Free accommodation for frontline health workers who need to self-isolate builds on the recent announcement that the Victorian Government has booked thousands of hotel rooms to quarantine newly arrived or returned travellers for 14 days.

The Government also recently launched a new website where retired health professionals or students who believe they have the drive and skills to help deliver quality health care and services can register their interest via the department's coronavirus website: www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus.

The Government has invested \$1.9 billion in our health system as part of our coronavirus response, including more beds, ICU equipment, as well as personal protective equipment for our dedicated health care workers – and stands ready to invest more as needed to slow the spread of coronavirus and save lives.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

"Victoria's hospital workforce and paramedics are heroes – we know they're at greater risk because of their work but they shouldn't have to fork out for a second place just to protect their families, loved ones or housemates."

"This will help slow the spread of the virus, protect our health system and save lives."

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos

"We're doing everything we can to support our dedicated hospital workers and paramedics as we manage this pandemic."

"Our frontline health workers already do so much to look after the rest of us, the least we can do is make sure they've got a free, safe place to go if they need it."

For information on coronavirus, please visit www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au or phone 1800 675 398