

Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier



Friday, 24 April 2020

LEGISLATION TO SUPPORT JOBS, SERVICES AND VICTORIANS PASSES

Emergency measures to support Victorians, save lives, protect businesses and jobs, and continue delivering vital government services during the coronavirus pandemic have passed Victorian Parliament.

The four Bills enable Victoria to respond to the unprecedented challenges created by coronavirus on our healthcare system and our economy.

The *Appropriation (Interim) Bill 2020* secures \$24.5 billion in emergency funding to save lives, support jobs and businesses, and set Victoria up to recover from the pandemic over the next two years.

This additional funding is vital to ensuring Victoria can respond swiftly and significantly to this crisis, and is on top of \$35.9 billion for the ordinary, ongoing operations of Government – like wages for our vital healthcare workers and other public sector staff.

The *Appropriation (Parliament) (Interim) Bill 2020* also passed Parliament last night and provides funding for the ongoing operations of parliament and oversight bodies including IBAC.

The *State Taxation Acts Amendment (Relief Measures) Bill 2020* extends the regional First Home Owners Grant for another year, and gives effect to bushfire tax relief measures announced earlier this year, including immediate payroll tax relief and stamp duty relief in State of Disaster areas.

The *COVID-19 Omnibus (Emergency Measures) Bill 2020* also passed and implements a range of temporary emergency measures to support Victorians and continue delivering the services we all rely on.

It also puts in place the National Cabinet tenancy reforms announced last week – including a ban on rental evictions and rent increases – and a range of other temporary changes to enable critical government functions to continue in line with requirements advised by the Chief Health Officer.

This Bill allows common-sense changes to comply with physical distancing measures – allowing planning permits to be displayed and sent electronically, and planning panels to conduct hearings remotely. It also allows for virtual meetings for councils and joint standing committees of the Parliament so they can carry out their work remotely.

The Bill gives long-term injured workers due to transition off weekly WorkCover payments, but who can't return to or find work due to their injury, up to six extra months of weekly WorkCover payments. It also gives hospitals more flexibility with nurse-to-patient ratios where coronavirus places significant demand on services.

While the Bill doesn't relax thresholds for determining bail or sentencing offenders – it does change how courts, corrections and other legal systems work so our justice system continues to operate throughout the crisis.

These measures include judge-only trials where the defendant has agreed and the prosecution has been consulted, longer interim extensions for Family Violence and Personal Safety Intervention Final Orders, and electronic filing and execution of affidavits and more use of audio-video links and other technology in proceedings.

Most measures in the Omnibus Bill will sunset after six months, and the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee will provide oversight and scrutiny of the measures rolled out.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

"These temporary measures will allow us to respond quickly to save lives, protect jobs and rebuild our economy."

"Coronavirus is creating unprecedented challenges, but Victoria is ready – we will get through this together."

For information about coronavirus visit coronavirus.vic.gov.au or call 1800 675 398.

Quote attributable to Treasurer Tim Pallas

“We know coronavirus will have a significant impact on businesses and jobs – and that it will get worse before it gets better. The emergency funding will support Victorians through this crisis, and help us rebuild afterwards.”