

# Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP  
Premier



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## CRACK INVESTIGATIVE TEAMS FOR CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAKS

New rapid response teams will be established to prevent, respond to and limit outbreaks as part of a major coronavirus surveillance boost announced today by the Victorian Government to coincide with the first step in easing restrictions.

Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos today announced \$20 million for a range of measures that will continue beyond the recent testing blitz, which has seen 161,000 Victorians tested over the past two weeks.

Testing will continue for Victorians with even the mildest of symptoms over the next month, with a target of a further 50,000 tests to be conducted over the next week, and 150,000 tests by the end of May – making sure we have the best possible data to inform changes to restrictions and that we keep Victorians as safe as possible.

As we ease restrictions, there will be further positive coronavirus cases, and possible outbreaks. To limit these cases and keep Victorians safe, the Government has outlined its plan for a new ‘outbreak unit’ within the Department of Health and Human Services’ public health team.

The unit will include new rapid response outbreak squads, staffed by public health specialists and clinicians to ensure appropriate testing, contact tracing and deep cleaning is carried out as soon as a cluster is identified.

The squads will also make proactive visits to high risk facilities, businesses and industries, and work with local services on infection control and prevention, while also stepping in to quickly manage any high-risk cases should they occur.

In addition to the new rapid response squads, mobile testing units will continue to operate and will be quickly deployed to communities that show a spike in cases – to help stop the virus spreading further.

Five metropolitan and three regional pop up testing sites established during the testing blitz at local shopping centres and community locations will continue, as health authorities continue to analyse the data already generated.

The investment will also include \$8 million for the work of our world-leading research institutes to better understand transmission, immunity and the long-term health impacts of coronavirus.

Public health surveillance will also be increased with ongoing testing of sewerage to track the virus in the community and provide early signposts of localised outbreaks.

These increased testing, tracing and outbreak response measures will ensure coronavirus – for which there is still no vaccine – continues to be quickly detected and controlled, and are a vital part of the preconditions that National Cabinet agreed to in order to begin cautiously easing restrictions.

This boost is on top of \$37 million announced in March to increase surveillance of the virus, which included a massive expansion of the public health response team to 1000 staff.

For more information about testing and locations go to [dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus](https://dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus).

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos

*“The testing blitz has helped us understand how the virus is moving through the community – these extra measures will ensure we continue to understand its movements and protect Victorians.”*

*“We have to stay vigilant until there is a vaccine, which is why we’re boosting our public health surveillance and response capacity, to keep Victorians safe as we move into the next phase of our pandemic response.”*

For information about coronavirus visit [www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au) or call 1800 675 398.