

Media Release

The Hon Shaun Leane MLC
Minister for Local Government
Minister for Suburban Development
Minister for Veterans



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NEW SUPPORT FOR VICTORIAN COMMUNITIES TO STAY CONNECTED

The Victorian Government is helping communities to stay connected during the coronavirus pandemic through a new grants program to support local initiatives.

Minister for Suburban Development Shaun Leane and Minister for Regional Development Jaclyn Symes today announced the opening of applications for the *Let's Stay Connected Fund*, with grants available for community organisations, local government bodies, incorporated not-for-profits and industry groups.

Grants of between \$5,000 and \$200,000 are available to support innovative, community-based initiatives that build connection, reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation and that can be implemented quickly – providing much-needed support across the state.

The \$1.3 million fund could potentially help community groups continue to operate by adapting the way they deliver programs or events, including through online forums.

Other possibilities include support for communities to improve their digital skills and access online communication channels, or new ways for people to continue volunteering within their communities while maintaining physical distancing requirements.

The fund responds to advice from the Government's Regional and Metropolitan Partnerships highlighting the link between social connection and community wellbeing and complements existing measures including the [Victoria Together](#) online portal that showcases the best of the state from live music and comedy to interactive exhibitions.

Victoria Together offers a vast range of resources, also including children's activities, live streaming from the Melbourne Zoo, exercise advice and recipes.

Applications for the *Let's Stay Connected Fund* are open until 31 August and applicants are encouraged to apply as early as possible at djpr.vic.gov.au/lets-stay-connected.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Suburban Development Shaun Leane

"We're making sure that our communities, particularly our most vulnerable Victorians, get the support they need through to the other side of this pandemic."

"This program will enable Victorians to back things that are already working well in their communities and support them to develop new ideas that will help people to stay connected with each other."

Quotes attributable to Minister for Regional Development Jaclyn Symes

"This new program goes right to the heart of our communities – giving local organisations the boost they need to make an immediate impact."

"The way our regional communities are experiencing the effects of coronavirus is different from those in Melbourne and it's important that we tailor support to local needs guided by the people who understand them best."

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