

Monday, 14 September 2020

TAKING TO THE FOOTPATHS: GETTING READY FOR OUTDOOR DINING

Victorians will experience summer in a whole new way this year, as we back businesses to reimagine the way they work – as part of a \$290 million package that delivers further support to the entertainment industry, repurposes Melbourne's CBD and gives sole traders a helping hand.

The global pandemic has meant our hospitality industry has had to close its doors, depriving us of the way of life that we love so much. Now we'll help take the indoors out into the open air – as Victorians embrace a new way of gathering together under a new COVID Normal.

Major cities like New York and London have led the way in transforming footpaths and roads to whole new experiences, aided by proactive planning and licensing regulations. Melbourne and Victoria will apply the best overseas experience to create a new, exciting model for outdoor entertainment as the weather begins to warm up.

The Victorian Government's *Outdoor Eating and Entertainment Package* will provide \$87.5 million to councils and businesses outside of Melbourne's CBD to make widespread outdoor dining safe, practical and a reality this summer.

\$58 million will go towards grants of up to \$5,000 to help hospitality businesses pay for the practical things that will make this plan work – umbrellas, outdoor furniture, screens and other equipment. We'll also invest in training, advertising, and the other supports businesses will need as we take our café culture outdoors.

The grants will be available to licensed and unlicensed cafés, restaurants, takeaway food businesses, pubs, taverns, bars and clubs with a payroll of less than \$3 million – with more than 11,000 businesses eligible to benefit.

Funding of \$29.5 million will be provided to local councils to help them implement swift and streamlined permit, enforcement and monitoring processes to support expanded outdoor dining in the Third Step in our roadmap to reopening.

Metropolitan councils and regional city councils will be eligible for up to \$500,000 in assistance, while rural councils will be eligible for up to \$250,000. This money can also be passed on to businesses in the form of reducing or waiving permit fees or invested in infrastructure such as streetscaping and lighting.

Recognising that Melbourne's CBD has suffered as we have acted to slow the spread of coronavirus, we will also create a landmark \$100 million fund to reshape Melbourne's CBD in partnership with the City of Melbourne.

There are more than 16,500 businesses registered in the City of Melbourne, supporting more than 479,000 jobs. The Melbourne City Recovery Fund will provide grants to city businesses, helping them to move outdoors with COVIDSafe events and rebuild our vibrant CBD.

Small and medium businesses will be able apply for \$30 million worth of grants to pay for equipment, convert spaces like rooftops and courtyards into hospitality zones and remodel internal layouts to allow for the better flow of patrons.

Reflecting our reputation as the cultural capital of the nation, a further \$30 million will support COVIDSafe events and cultural activities to attract visitors back to the CBD when it's safe to do so. Another \$40 million will go towards providing physical improvements to the CBD streetscape, which could include wider footpaths, bollards and street planter boxes.

We know sole traders have done it tough during the pandemic, so we'll lend a hand with a new \$100 million Sole Trader Support Fund. The Fund will provide grants of \$3,000 to eligible sole traders working in sectors of the economy that will continue to be affected by restrictions, like media and film production, creative studios, outdoor entertainment and in private museums and galleries – as well as gym owners.

While many sole traders have been relying on JobKeeper payments to get by, overheads are adding up and these grants will provide extra support to help these businesses get through until they are back to full operation.

To be eligible for a grant, sole traders must be a tenant or licensee in a commercial premises or location and operate in a sector of the economy that is restricted, heavily restricted or not opening under the Second Step of the Roadmap.

Today's announcements are in addition to yesterday's \$3 billion in grants, tax relief and cashflow support for Victorian businesses – the largest package of its kind ever delivered in Victoria.

For more information about business support initiatives, go to business.vic.gov.au.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

"We're the cultural and dining capital of our nation. That means, when it comes to reimagining what eating and entertainment means under COVID Normal, there's no one better equipped than Melbourne and Victoria."

"It will be our innovation, ideas and creativity that will help us find – and maintain – our COVID Normal."

Quote attributable to Minister for Industry Support and Recovery Martin Pakula

"We'll help Melbourne recover by bringing people back to the CBD safely, with new events and practical support for operators."

Quote attributable to Minister for Small Business Jaala Pulford

"We've listened to our sole traders and understand they've been doing it tough – this support will give them more certainty, and more security."

Quote attributable to Minister for Consumer Affairs Melissa Horne

"I know it's a tough time for the hospitality industry – but this is a step in the right direction and we'll work with businesses and give them the support they need to navigate this path to COVID Normal."