

# Media Release

**The Hon James Merlino MP**  
Acting Premier  
Minister for Education  
Minister for Mental Health



Thursday, 29 April 2021

## **PLANNING TO BEGIN ON DEDICATED QUARANTINE HUB**

The Victorian Government has selected a preferred site and will now commence discussions with the Commonwealth about planning for a new purpose-built quarantine accommodation hub, guarding against the potential long-term threat of coronavirus and its changing variants.

With a delayed vaccine rollout here in Australia and an increasingly dire situation around the world, it's clear quarantine will continue to be a part of our protections for some time.

It's why, subject to Commonwealth agreement, planning will start on a 500-bed alternative quarantine hub at Donnybrook Rd, Mickleham, with an expected cost of around \$15 million to get the project ready for construction.

The Victorian Government has provided a detailed summary of the business case to the Commonwealth and will commence discussions about gaining access to the preferred site – which is on Commonwealth land and next to an existing animal quarantine facility.

Over a year ago, the states and territories stepped up to establish hotel quarantine when it was clear Australia needed to urgently establish a large-scale quarantine program.

However, in recognition that international border controls and quarantine are federal responsibilities, Victoria has submitted a proposal to the Commonwealth requesting construction costs and that they take ultimate ownership of the hub – similar to the nation's only other standalone site, Howard Springs in the Northern Territory.

While discussions about construction costs and ownership are underway, the Victorian Government intends to get on with the planning work to ensure the project doesn't lose time.

The final decision on whether to proceed with construction will be made in September, pending support from the Commonwealth and future insight on a range of matters, including the progress of our nation's vaccine rollout, the efficacy of vaccines in preventing transmission, and Commonwealth decisions on rules governing travel into and out of Australia.

The design of the new hub is fully informed by experts in public health and infection control and is based on the existing standalone facility currently operating at Howard Springs. With its cabin-style outdoor accommodation, Howard Springs has been widely acknowledged as the safest and most functional design for quarantine in Australia.

The master plan for the new hub includes dedicated onsite services, including catering, that will support strong infection control and prevention measures. It is also designed with the ability to increase to up to 3000 beds as part of a scalable build if a larger facility is determined to be required at any point.

The new hub will also be designed with relocatable cabins so that it can be utilised for alternative and future needs, including ongoing quarantine arrangements, crisis accommodation and other emergencies.

As part of the business case process, multiple sites were considered and evaluated against a set of selection criteria that included proximity to a public hospital, international airport, transport and other services, as well as land area and site-specific considerations.

A detailed project summary is available at [vic.gov.au/alternative-quarantine-accommodation-business-case](https://vic.gov.au/alternative-quarantine-accommodation-business-case).

### **Quotes attributable to Acting Premier James Merlino**

*"It's clear this virus will be with us for some time. While we can't control how well or how fast other countries deal with the pandemic or their vaccine rollout, we can make sure our own quarantine system is as strong and safe as possible."*

*"The best time to start work on a standalone quarantine hub would have been 12 months ago – the second-best time is now."*

### **Quotes attributable to Acting Minister for Police and Emergency Services Danny Pearson**

*"We've seen how wildly unpredictable and dangerous this virus can be. This is our insurance policy to make sure we're doing everything we can to keep Victoria and Australia safe."*

*"We've done the work to stack this project up and now we're asking the Commonwealth to get on board and help deliver it."*