

Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier



Tuesday, 3 March 2020

VICTORIA TAKING ACTION TO FIGHT COVID-19

The Victorian Government is taking action to prepare Victoria's health system for the continued spread of COVID-19.

At present, there have been 33 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Australia, including nine in Victoria. There have now also been two confirmed cases of human-to-human transmission of COVID-19 in New South Wales.

The Chief Health Officer briefed the Cabinet yesterday and confirmed that Victoria is well prepared for dealing with COVID-19.

To stop the spread of COVID-19, the Victorian Government is currently:

- Monitoring and investigating cases as they occur, identifying and sharing accurate information about the virus on a timely basis
- Working with the Commonwealth Government to ensure the primary care sector has the appropriate clinical knowledge, response and capacity available to treat patients
- Communicating with at-risk groups about preventive actions they can take to further reduce transmission
- Preparing hospital surge management activities to be ready for potential increased demand as COVID-19 spreads.

The Government is also providing \$6 million to the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity working with the Burnet Institute and other experts to fast-track new treatments and vaccines for COVID-19.

The Victorian Government is taking all necessary precautions as we work closely with the Commonwealth in response to this virus. While COVID-19 has not been declared a pandemic, there is a high probability that the virus will spread and impact more Victorians.

That's why we are preparing to take additional targeted action if medical experts advise us to do so, including:

- Ramping up public communication with more information about preventing infection by COVID-19 and other disease control strategies
- Increasing space in our hospitals for urgent and critical care, and considering the delay of non-urgent care or procedures, such as elective surgery
- Providing different models of care to reduce public exposure, such as telehealth.

While we have not yet received that advice, all of us can play our part in containing the spread of this virus.

The easiest way to protect yourself and your family is to wash your hands regularly and cover your mouth and nose with your elbow when coughing or sneezing.

If you've been in mainland China or Iran in the past 14 days or you've been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, you're advised to stay at home, and avoid public places.

If you are returning from Italy or South Korea, and you work as a healthcare worker or as a residential aged care worker, you should not attend your regular work for 14 days.

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If you fall into the risk groups and suspect you may have COVID-19 call the dedicated hotline, serviced by Nurse-On-Call, on **1800 675 398**.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

“While we are doing what we can to contain COVID-19, we are also preparing to take more targeted action if, as expected, the virus starts impacting more Victorians.”

“We are working closely with the Commonwealth and our response is being guided by the very best expert advice.”

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos

“Victoria’s health services, including our hospitals and emergency services, have existing pandemic arrangements in place, which are ready to be activated if they are required.”

“All of us can play our part when it comes to stopping the spread of this virus – please heed the health warnings and avoid public places if you are in the at-risk groups.”