



26 May 2020

COVID-19 Update

The National Cabinet has not met over the last week but today the Prime Minister outlined the Australian Government's plans for the economy.

He set the scene by highlighting Australia's world leading success at controlling COVID-19 and looking after the economy. In this respect he highlighted our achievements in saving lives and in preparing our health system, through increasing our intensive care (ICU) unit capacity, number of respirators, PPE stocks and our ability to track and trace COVID-19 cases. To reinforce this he highlighted that some countries have experienced death rates 100 times more than ours.

In terms of the economy he indicated that while more than 5 million people are benefiting from the Job Seeker and Job Keeper programs that they had to borrow in order to be able to do this. With the focus on opening up a COVID-19 safe economy the overwhelming priority was to now pay close attention to the health crisis while also focusing on jobs, and that to do this Australia needed a "Job Maker Plan". He said that this plan would be guided by the principles that the Liberal and National parties have always believed in including:

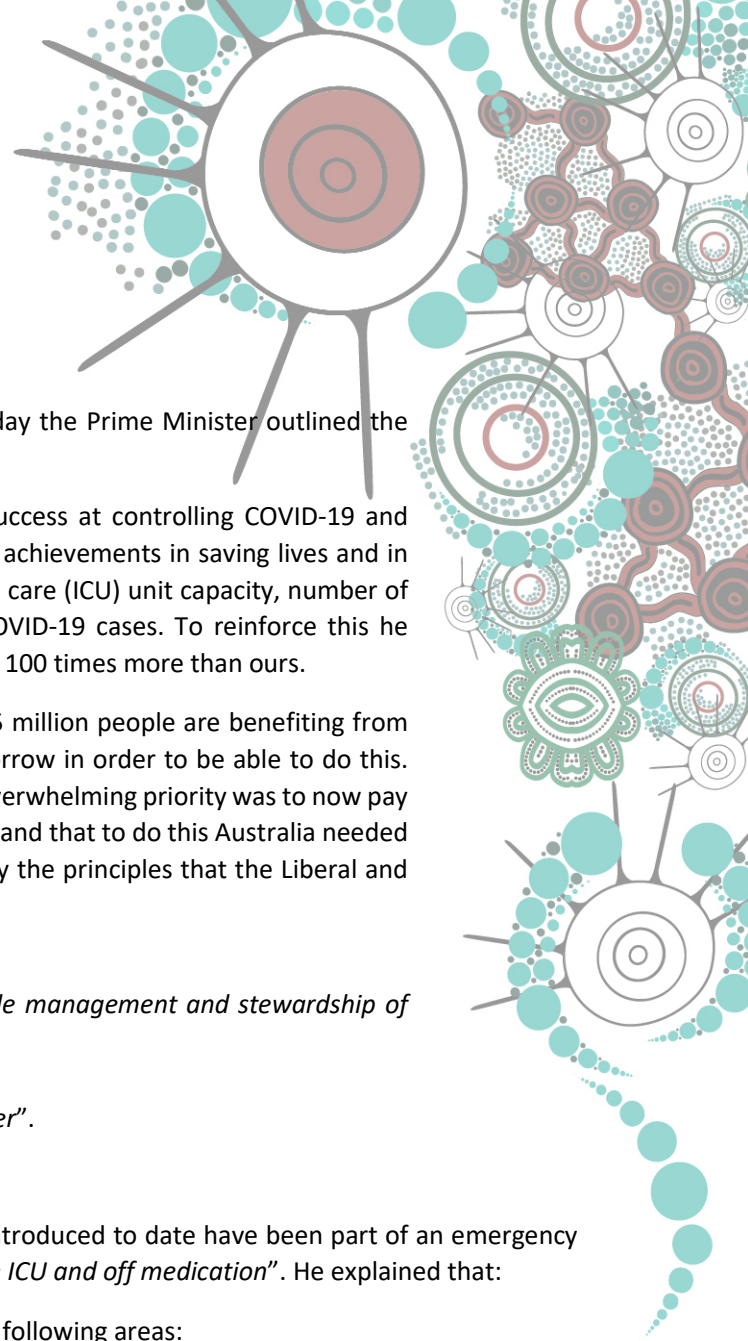
- continuing to be part of global supply chains
- "Caring for Country" which he defined as "the responsible management and stewardship of what has been left to us for future generations"
- seeking to leverage and build on Australia's strengths
- accelerating progress or on "what makes the boat go faster".

The Prime Minister reinforced that the economic measures introduced to date have been part of an emergency response and that it was time to take the economy "out of the ICU and off medication". He explained that:

- Australia's "Job Maker Plan" would include a focus on the following areas:
 - › skills
 - › reducing regulation and industrial relations
 - › research and technology
 - › energy and resources
 - › open banking and digital technology and
 - › manufacturing.
- the immediate focus would be on Skills and Industrial relations.

In regards to skills he identified that we needed to train people for the skills that are needed for new business and that the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Sector was the means to do this. He pointed to jurisdictional differences in the cost and quality of training, that the Government would be supporting a number of pilots where industries would define qualifications, and that a National Skills Commission has been established to define national skills sets. Work will also commence to highlight where the demands for jobs are, so the skills of workers is better aligned to industry requirements. New funding arrangements will also be developed to ensure States and Territories are more accountable for what they deliver in this space.

In regards to Industrial Relations he highlighted how well the Government and Unions had been working and that this provided the opportunity to bring all key stakeholders together to fix systemic problems and chart a reform agenda.



As a first step the Minister for Industrial Relations will establish and chair working groups to examine:

- the simplification of Awards
- Enterprise Agreement making
- casual and fixed term employees and
- compliance and enforcement.

Over the coming weeks he will speak about the remaining areas of the plan.

After his speech he was questioned about if the referendum for constitution recognition was going to be delayed. In response he indicated that the referendum would be held when the Minister for Indigenous Affairs is comfortable that consensus across the country has been reached.

In the meantime, Australia is continuing to register a low number of COVID-19 cases, some resulting from community transmission. Given the incubation time of the virus we are yet to fully understand the effects of the easing of restrictions. Please stay vigilant and urge your friends and family to do so to. Keep washing your hands, practicing physical distancing and only go to places where large numbers of people gather if you need to.

Thanks again for helping to keep our mob safe.

The NATSIHWA Team