

# Managing COVID-19 in 2021 and Beyond





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## **Executive summary**

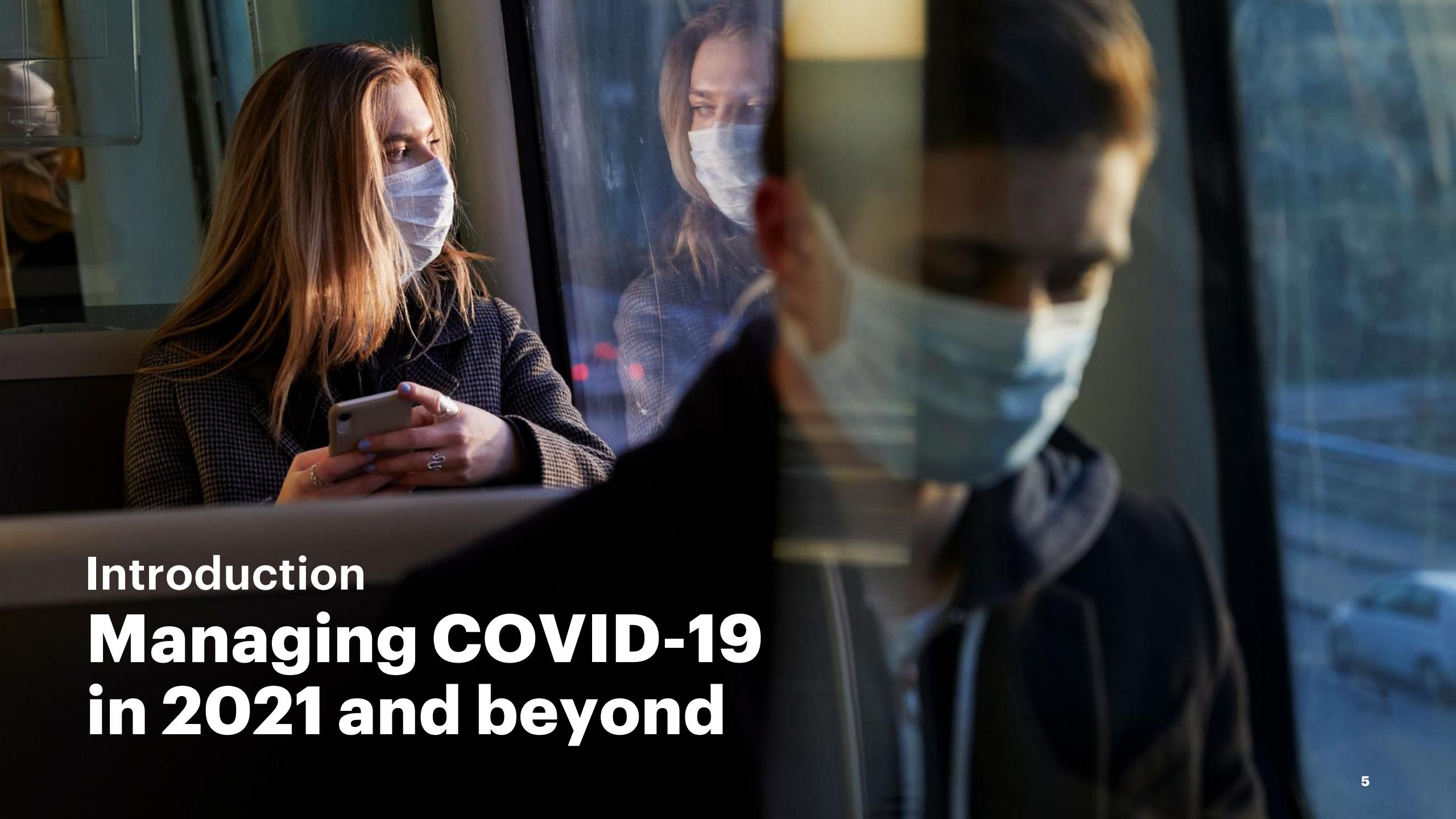
**Australia is about to enter a new phase in the battle against COVID-19. From the first lockdowns in March 2020, our response was fast, blunt and largely successful. For many Australians, this success came at a very high social and economic cost—an unavoidable reality when reacting to an unknown virus with little information.**

**But times have changed. With much more knowledge about COVID-19 and the roll-out of vaccines, Australia can now develop a clear path to immunity and economic recovery.**

**In 2021, Australia's COVID-19 response will need to shift gear to embrace smarter, more targeted and more coordinated national solutions. Government, business and communities will need to work together to safely reopen the economy and ensure Australia emerges from COVID-19 a healthier and more resilient nation.**

# Executive summary

<b>Introduction</b> <b>A new approach to managing COVID-19 in 2021 and beyond</b>	Australia's challenge in 2021 is to develop a clear path to immunity and economic recovery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Australia performed relatively well in 2020 but <b>the pandemic is far from over</b>.</li><li><b>Vaccines will take time to roll out.</b> Population coverage will depend on take-up, efficacy in relation to transmission, and in the longer term the longevity of the vaccine.</li><li><b>New virus strains and the possibility of reinfection</b> present additional risks that may prolong the presence of COVID-19.</li><li>Recognising that COVID-19 will be with us for some time requires a <b>new virus management strategy</b> that maximises public safety while minimising the economic and social costs of restrictions.</li></ul>
<b>Priority 1</b> <b>Increase national coordination, and lift all states and territories up to best practice</b>	More consistent national approaches would improve health outcomes and lift economic confidence.	<b>1.1 Lift all states to best practice:</b> Ensure all states are following best practice for testing, tracing and other virus control measures. <b>1.2 Introduce national approaches:</b> Enhance information sharing and consistency in relation to hotspot definitions, lockdowns and travel restrictions. <b>1.3 Increase coordination between jurisdictions:</b> Improve information sharing and coordination around vaccine roll out, virus testing and quarantine procedures.
<b>Priority 2</b> <b>Shift to more targeted and lower-cost restrictions</b>	Cost-benefit analysis should ensure that the lowest-cost restrictions are implemented.	<b>2.1 Shift to lower-cost restrictions:</b> Undertake cost benefit analysis for restrictions. Phase out costly and ineffective restrictions such as state border closures, and maintain lower-cost restrictions such as improved hygiene, mask wearing and check-ins. <b>2.2 Ensure restrictions are targeted and proportional:</b> Focus restrictions as much as possible within geographic regions. <b>2.3 Constantly evolve restrictions to improve efficiency:</b> Constantly develop and improve our responses, to ensure we are innovating, increasing their efficacy of and reducing the cost.
<b>Priority 3</b> <b>Provide more forward guidance and support for heavily affected industries</b>	Government urgently needs to support heavily affected industries with clear plans and ongoing support.	<b>3.1 Provide more forward guidance to reduce uncertainty:</b> Government and business need to work together to determine how key elements of the economy will operate in 2021 and beyond. Significantly more planning, transparency and guidance is needed regarding international travel protocols, vaccine plans, international student arrivals, skilled migration, major events and tourism. Without more forward guidance, businesses in affected sectors will not have the certainty they need to reopen. <b>3.2 Deliver financial support for affected industries:</b> The Government should continue to work with heavily affected industries and extend targeted support as appropriate.
<b>Beyond 2021</b> <b>Ensure Australia emerges stronger and healthier after COVID-19</b>	Australia should emerge from COVID stronger and more resilient for the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Improve hygiene:</b> Australians should wear masks and stay at home when ill with the common cold, the flu and other diseases.</li><li><b>Adopt stronger workplace practices:</b> Businesses should provide support for workers to take leave or work from home when they or family members may have been exposed to common infections.</li><li><b>Be ready for future viruses:</b> Australia should learn from COVID-19 to ensure we are prepared for future pandemics. This may include developing the national pandemic planning capability and industrial medical manufacturing capacity.</li></ul>

A photograph of a woman with long brown hair, wearing a white surgical mask and a dark grey houndstooth jacket. She is looking down at a light-colored smartphone in her hands. The background shows the interior of a train car with other passengers and blurred city lights through the window.

# Introduction **Managing COVID-19 in 2021 and beyond**

# Managing COVID-19 in 2021 and beyond

**Australia's COVID-19 response will need to shift gear in 2021, recognising that the virus will be with us for some time and developing a clear plan to safely reopen the economy.**

This plan starts with accepting that the virus is far from over.

- Vaccines will take time to roll out. Population coverage will depend on take-up, efficacy in relation to transmission, and in the longer term the longevity of the vaccine.
- New virus strains and the possibility of reinfection present additional risks.
- There is no available data on the long-term durability of any of the major vaccines on the market. These uncertainties may mean COVID-19 is a part of our lives for a long time to come.

**Recognising that COVID-19 will be with us for some time requires a new virus management strategy that maximises public safety while minimising the economic and social costs of restrictions.**

- COVID-19 has imposed massive economic costs on Australia, slashing \$170 billion from our annual GDP and pushing our debt beyond \$1 trillion this decade.<sup>1</sup>
- State border closures are costing Australia \$2.1 billion per month<sup>2</sup> and creating uncertainty that is sapping consumer confidence and business investment.
- Restrictions have come at an enormous social cost: mental health challenges doubled<sup>3</sup> and domestic violence rose by a third<sup>4</sup> during lockdowns.

**In 2021, Australia's COVID-19 response will need to pivot.**

- We will need to embrace more coordinated national approaches that ensure best practice in all jurisdictions and provide clarity and confidence to the community.
- We should shift towards more efficient and targeted restrictions that deliver strong public health outcomes at a lower cost to the economy and community.
- Government, business and communities will need to work together to develop protocols for safely reopening the economy and ensuring heavily affected industries receive ongoing support.
- All Australians should look to the future and apply what we have learnt from COVID-19, to emerge from the pandemic a healthier and more resilient nation.

# Domestic vaccination will put Australia on the path to removing restrictions if we can adopt best practices to deal with international travel

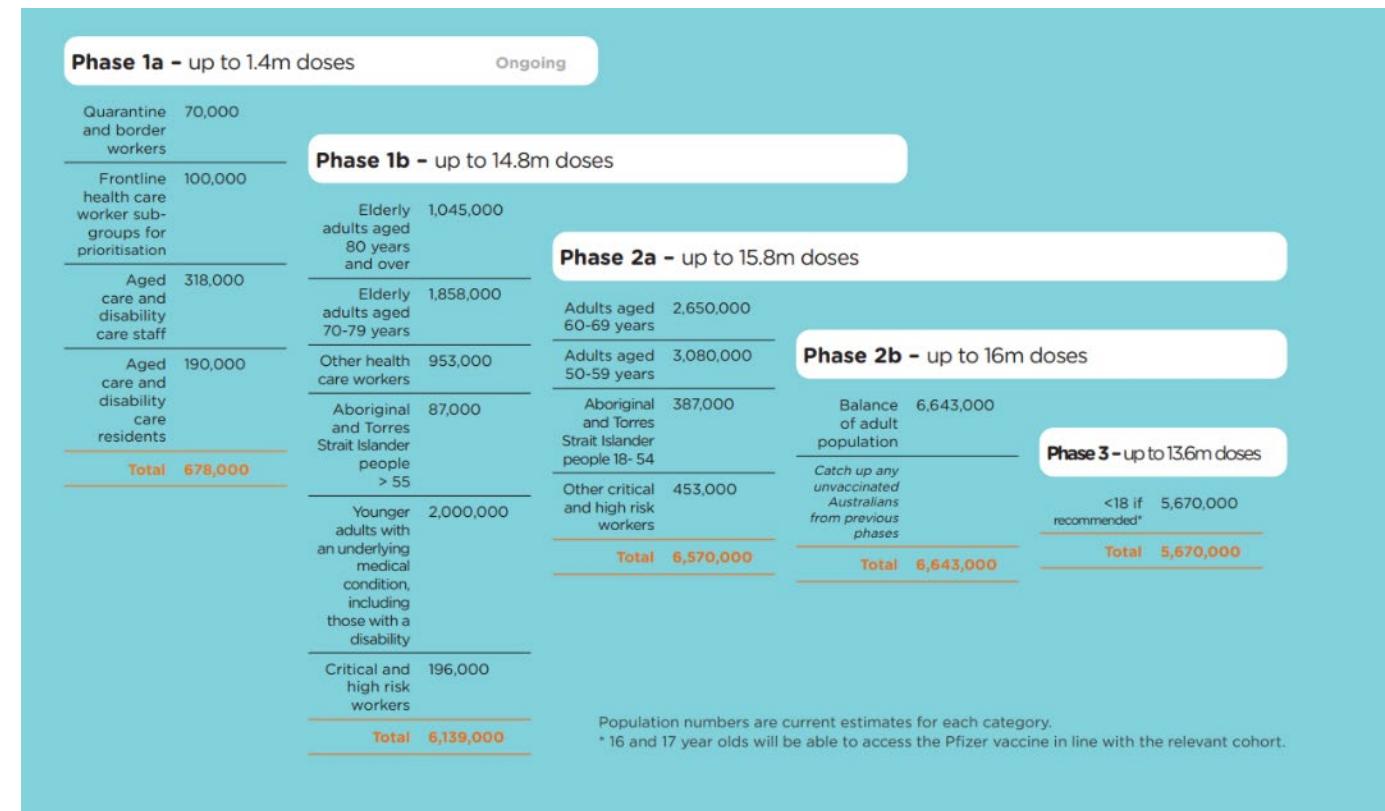
## Australia will roll out vaccines in 2021, starting with priority groups.

But this is a global pandemic. In some parts of the world vaccines will be much slower to roll out.

Australia can't afford to lock ourselves off from the rest of the world until the vaccine has been rolled out globally.

So, we need to find a way to deal with the virus. This requires all Australian jurisdictions to adjust and tailor restrictions as the vaccine roll out progresses.

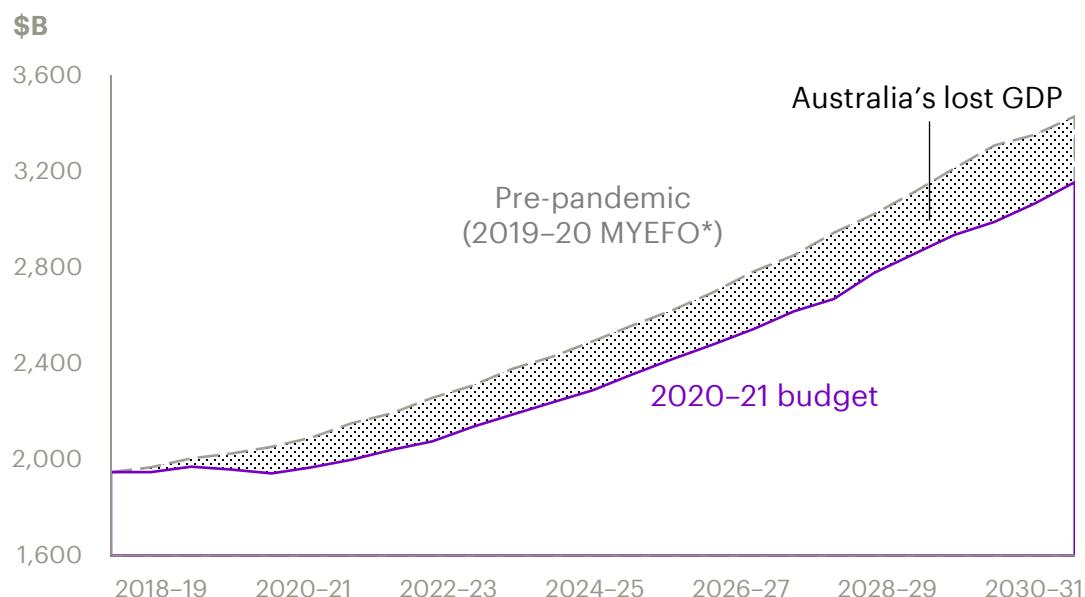
## COVID-19 vaccine national rollout strategy<sup>5</sup>



# COVID-19 restrictions have come at a massive economic cost to Australia

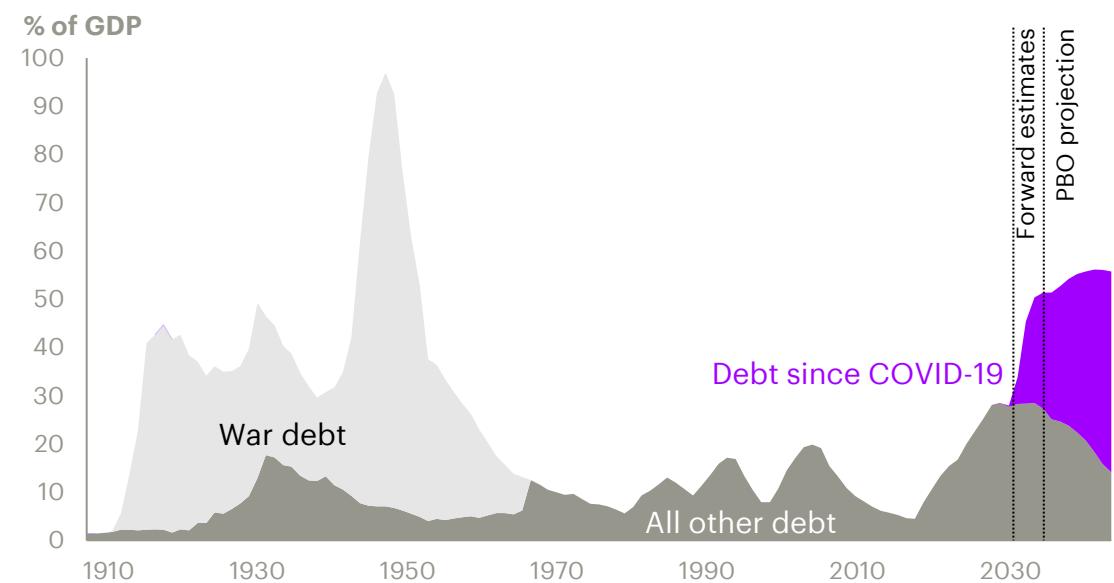
**Australia has lost \$170 billion in annual GDP<sup>6</sup>**

**Nominal GDP forecasts and projections,  
2018–19 to 2030–31**



**Australian debt will increase by more than \$1 trillion<sup>7</sup>**

**Gross debt (securities on issue, excluding borrowing on behalf of the states) and nominal GDP growth, 1910 to 2030**



## Social costs have also been significant

- Mental health problems during COVID-19 were at least twice as prevalent as in non-pandemic circumstances.<sup>8</sup>
- It is predicted that 45% of Australians will have experienced some psychological distress by August 2022. The figure is expected to be almost 60% for younger Australians in 2021.<sup>8</sup>
- There were 100,000 fewer general practitioner (GP) visits in Australia during March 2020 (at the height of the pandemic) in relation to managing chronic diseases, which could lead to an increased risk of heart disease.<sup>9</sup>
- Mammograms conducted in April 2020 decreased by 98.5%, compared to April 2019.<sup>10</sup>
- Australia has reported a 37% increase in calls to domestic violence helplines since the start of the pandemic and a 20% increase in calls to Lifeline.<sup>11</sup>
- Calls and online contacts to Beyond Blue's Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service jumped 20% from June to July 2020, during Melbourne's lockdown.<sup>12</sup>



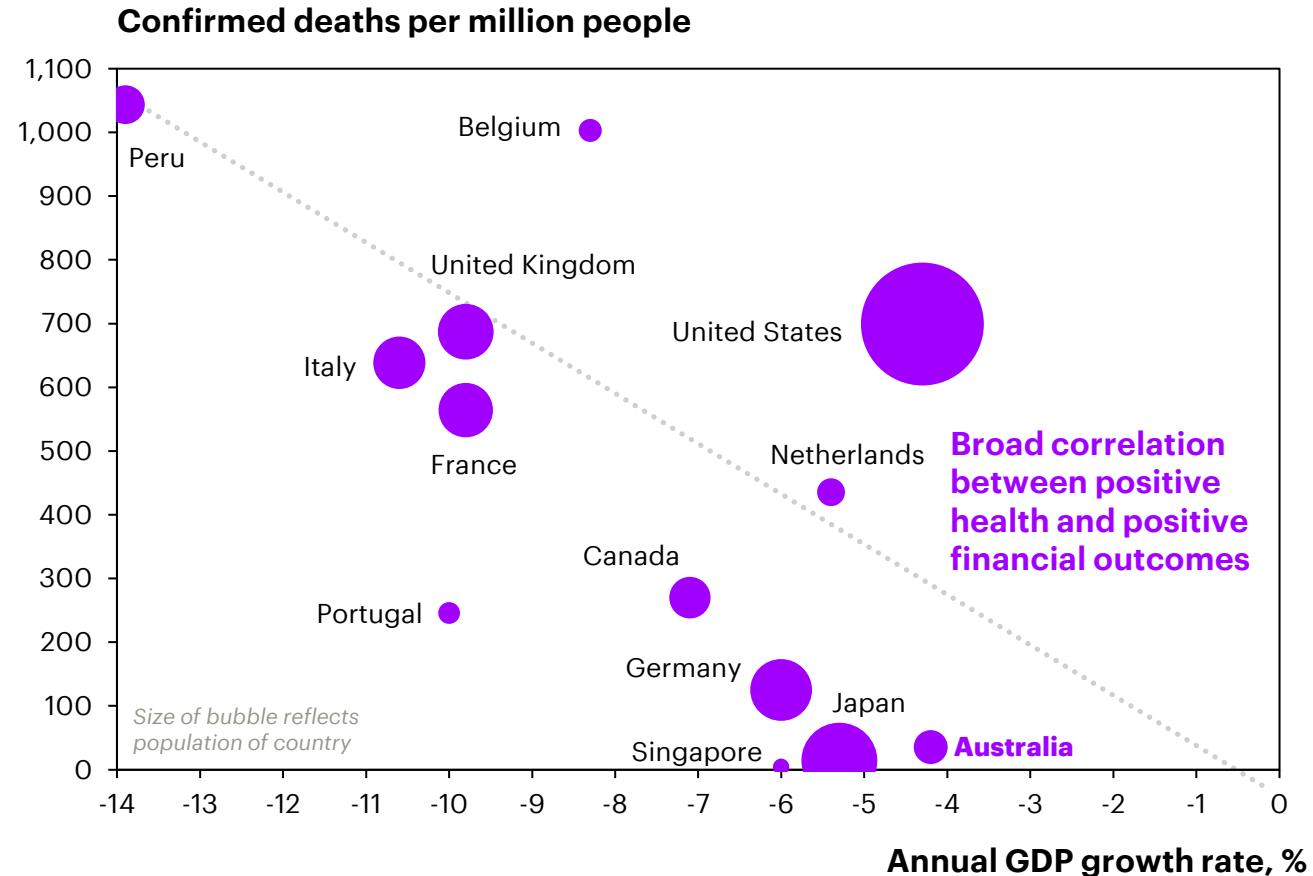
# Countries that have protected the health of their citizens have also protected their economies<sup>13, 14</sup>

## The best outcome for the economy is good health

Countries that suffered the most severe economic downturns—like Peru, Italy and the UK—are generally among the countries with the highest COVID-19 death rates.

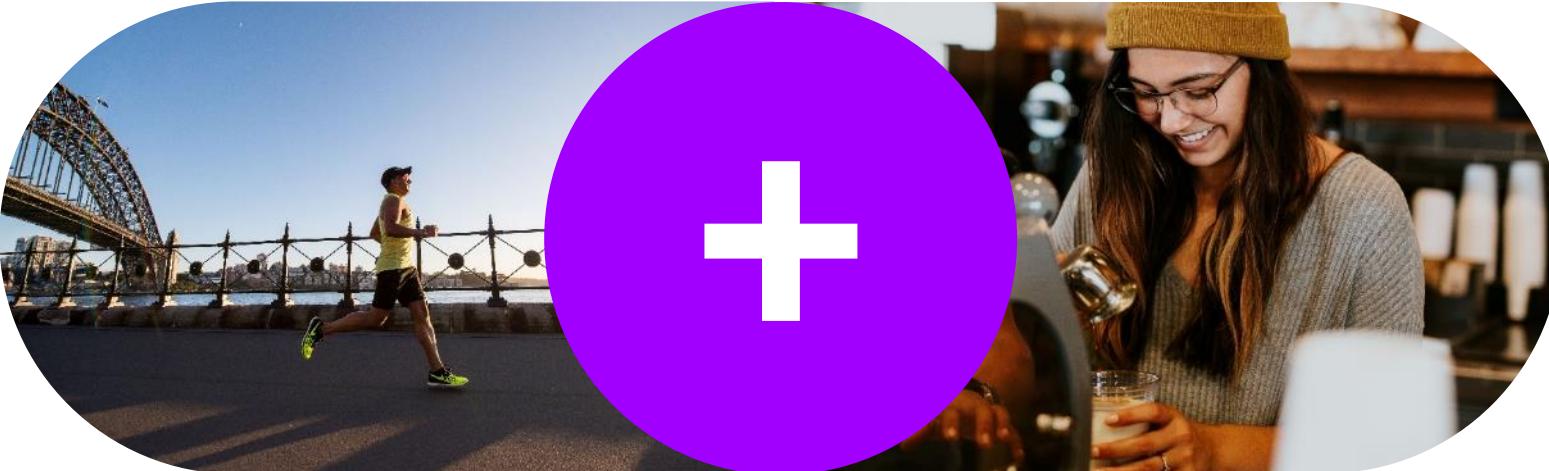
Countries where the economic impact has been modest, like Japan and Australia, have also managed to keep the death rate low.

Among countries with available GDP data, there was no evidence of a trade-off between people's health and protecting the economy.



# In 2021 Australia needs a plan to safely reopen the economy as the vaccine rolls out

**Strong  
health  
outcomes**



**Strong  
economy &  
community**

**Priority 1: Increase national coordination, and lift all states and territories up to best practice**

More consistent national approaches would improve health outcomes and lift economic confidence. All states and territories should implement best practice in tracking and tracing.

**Priority 2: Shift to more targeted and lower-cost restrictions**

Cost-benefit analysis should ensure that the lowest-cost restrictions are implemented, so that we continue to deliver strong health outcomes with a lower economic impact.

**Priority 3: Provide more forward guidance and support for heavily affected industries**

Government urgently needs to support heavily affected industries with clear plans and ongoing financial support.

A photograph showing a person from the side, wearing a cap and a yellow shirt, sitting in a car. They are looking out through a large window or glass partition that offers a view of a landscape under a warm, golden sunset. The scene is dimly lit, with the primary light source being the setting sun.

**Priority 1:**  
**Increase national  
coordination, and lift all states  
and territories up to best practice**

## Priority 1

# Increase national coordination, and lift all states and territories up to best practice

## The problem

Australian states and territories have responsibility for public health, and the authority to choose their own approach to handling the pandemic.

The National Cabinet and other cross-jurisdictional bodies have made some progress in coordinating the national response. But there is still too much variation in capabilities and approaches across jurisdictions.

This variation means that best practice is not uniformly applied, creating uncertainty and increasing costs for Australian business and communities.

The economy will only bounce back if Australians feel confident they can participate and travel safely. Community support for restrictions will be maximised if people see a consistent set of rules across the nation.

## The way ahead

Australia needs to adopt predictable and nationally consistent best practice to defeat the virus and build economic confidence.

**1.1 Lift all states to best practice:** Ensure all states are following best practice for testing, tracing and other virus control measures.

**1.2 Introduce national approaches:** Enhance information sharing and consistency in relation to hotspot definitions, lockdowns and travel restrictions.

**1.3 Increase coordination between jurisdictions:** Improve information sharing and coordination around virus testing and quarantine procedures.

# Australia needs to ensure national best practice in virus management across states and territories

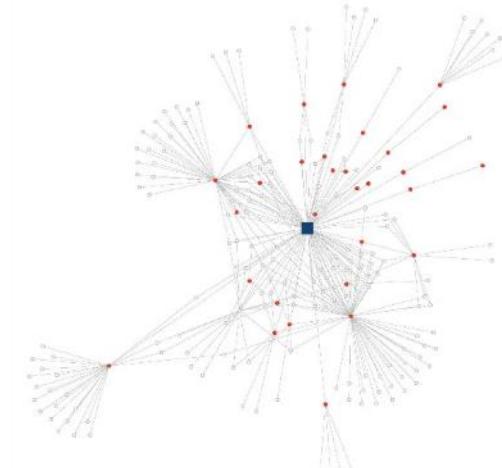
Throughout the last 12 months we have seen the devastating consequences of inadequate quarantine, testing and tracing capabilities. Australia needs to lift all states and territories up to best practice in all essential areas of virus management.

The Chief Scientist reported that tracing capabilities varied significantly across states and territories<sup>15</sup>. In some jurisdictions, interviews with contacts are recorded on paper before being entered into a database, causing delays and errors. Contact information is inconsistently collected when people visit venues. Contacts are not always followed up in the person's preferred language. Domestic airline passenger lists and contact details are not always accurate.

**The Chief Scientist<sup>15</sup> recommended that all jurisdictions:**

- Establish performance metrics for speed of testing and contact tracing
- Operate a national digital data exchange mechanism between jurisdictions
- Invest in technology, automation and digital systems for outbreak management
- Engage and communicate with communities, including those in higher risk groups and those with diverse cultural or language needs.

National Contact Tracing Review



A report for Australia's National Cabinet  
November 2020

# Australia needs a nationally coordinated approach to virus management, including lockdowns and mobility restrictions

The national cabinet has facilitated some coordination between states and territories. But discordant regimes are creating unnecessary inconsistency and uncertainty.

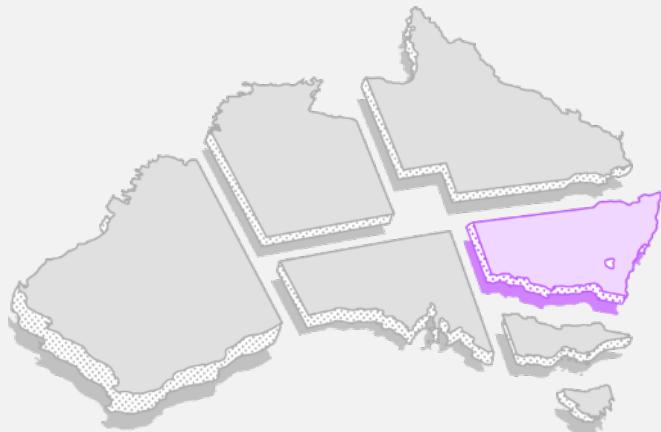
In many areas of virus response, Australia needs a more coordinated approach across states and territories.

**Hotspots:** There is a national “hotspot” definition (where there is a rolling three-day average of 10 locally acquired cases per day) but different jurisdictions have different responses for different durations.

**Tracking and tracing:** There is a need for coordination and rapid information sharing to enable nationally consistent tracking and tracing.

**Quarantine:** Ongoing quarantine practices require forward capacity analysis, capacity sharing and a national facility for emergency situations.

**Testing:** Australia needs to adopt a common approach to testing, including wastewater testing.



## Example: One hotspot, many different restrictions

In December 2020, Sydney's Northern Beaches were declared a COVID-19 hotspot. States' responses to the outbreak varied greatly, creating uncertainty and confusion. By 26 January 2021, a month after the outbreak, every state still had a different approach to travellers from Greater Sydney.

**QLD:** Greater Sydney travellers unable to enter except for an essential reason.

**VIC:** Greater Sydney travellers permitted to enter with an “Orange Zone Permit” and required to quarantine until they receive a negative test.

**WA:** NSW travellers permitted to enter with a G2G PASS, subject to health screening and 14-day quarantine.

**SA:** Greater Sydney travellers not permitted to enter.

# Australia needs a nationally consistent approach to health outbreaks

**Australia doesn't have a consistent, risk-based approach to COVID-19 outbreaks. Different states take a different approach, often using blunt instruments like state border closures or widespread lockdowns.**

This uncertainty is reducing consumer and business confidence.

In 2021 Australia needs a nationally consistent approach to health outbreaks that includes targeted and proportional responses.

## Zero cases

### Consistent vigilance

#### Maintenance of low cost health precautions including:

- Strong hygiene practices
- Masks in high-risk indoor environments
- Venue check ins
- Consistent community testing for people with symptoms
- Best practice travel and border protocols

## 1-9 cases

### Risk management

#### Enhanced health precautions and outbreak control measures:

- Intensive testing, tracking and tracing
- Local closures of large events & high risk venues
- Enhanced social distancing requirements
- No state border closures
- No state-wide business closures

## 10+ cases<sup>16</sup>

### Official hotspot

#### Targeted local lockdown focused on affected local government areas:

- Closure of local non-essential businesses
- Restrictions on non-essential movement outside LGAs
- Restrictions on household social gatherings
- No state border closures without national coordination & evidence of necessity

# As domestic vaccination rolls out, the focus of restrictions will shift to international travel and best practice quarantine protocols

**Australia will roll out a vaccine domestically in 2021.**

But some parts of the rest of the world may be much slower.

To avoid locking ourselves away from the rest of the world, Australia needs best practice quarantine and international travel processes.

Restrictions should be eased and travel corridors increased in response to the changing risk environment.

## Recommendations of the National Review of Hotel Quarantine<sup>17</sup>

- States and Territories should embed end-to-end assurance mechanisms and look to continuously improve hotel quarantine to ensure that it is delivered consistent with good practice.
- Information on the quarantine system should be easy to access by travelers in order to ensure their understanding of quarantine and to better psychologically prepare them for the experience. This should be provided across relevant Commonwealth/ State and Territory websites.
- People in quarantine should have access to timely decision making, review processes and complaints mechanisms, including pathways for escalation.
- Options for new models of quarantine should be developed for consideration by National Cabinet including a risk assessment of these options and an analysis of traveler suitability.
- National Cabinet should consider exempting low risk cohorts, such as travelers from New Zealand, from mandatory quarantine.
- The Australian Government should consider the establishment a national facility for quarantine to be used for emergency situations, emergency evacuations or urgent scalability.

A photograph showing a woman from the side, wearing a white face mask and a dark long-sleeved shirt. She is looking down at a shopping bag in her hands. In the background, there are racks of clothes, including several light-colored blouses on the left and a floral dress on the right. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting an indoor setting like a mall or a clothing store.

## Priority 2

# Shift to more targeted and lower-cost restrictions



## Priority 2

# Shift to more targeted and lower-cost restrictions

## The problem

**Australia's initial response to the virus was fast, blunt and largely successful. However, for many Australians this success came at a very high social and economic cost. Industries were shuttered, jobs were lost and huge fiscal liabilities were accumulated.**

Blunt instruments were an unavoidable reality when reacting to an unknown virus with little information.

But now there is much more knowledge about COVID-19, Australia should be moving to more targeted and efficient restrictions and interventions that impose lower costs on the economy. We should be following best practice and leveraging technology to beat the virus while safely reopening the economy.

## The way ahead

**Australia should be targeting any given health outcome with the most efficient interventions. This means conducting rigorous cost-benefit analysis of restrictions, using a risk management approach and responding proportionally to new outbreaks.**

**2.1 Shift to lower-cost restrictions:** As the vaccine rolls out, phase out costly and ineffective restrictions such as state border closures, and maintain lower-cost restrictions such as improved hygiene, mask wearing and check-ins.

**2.2 Ensure restrictions are targeted and proportional:** Focus restrictions as much as possible within geographic regions, as was implemented in Sydney's Northern Beaches.

**2.3 Constantly evolve restrictions to improve efficiency:** Constantly develop and improve our responses, to ensure we are innovating, increasing their efficacy and reducing the cost.

# Ad hoc and inconsistent restrictions, such as state border closures, are imposing large costs on business and impacting consumer confidence

**\$2.1 billion**

per month cost due to state border closures<sup>18</sup>

The ramifications extend beyond the financial loss of grounded planes.

- More than 34,000 people have been affected by job losses across the aviation industry.<sup>18</sup>
- Supply chains have been blocked as transport and logistics face different restrictions from state to state.

**52% won't travel**

due to border closure fear rather than fear of COVID-19<sup>19</sup>

Lack of confidence is proving a crushing blow to the tourism, hospitality and travel industries.

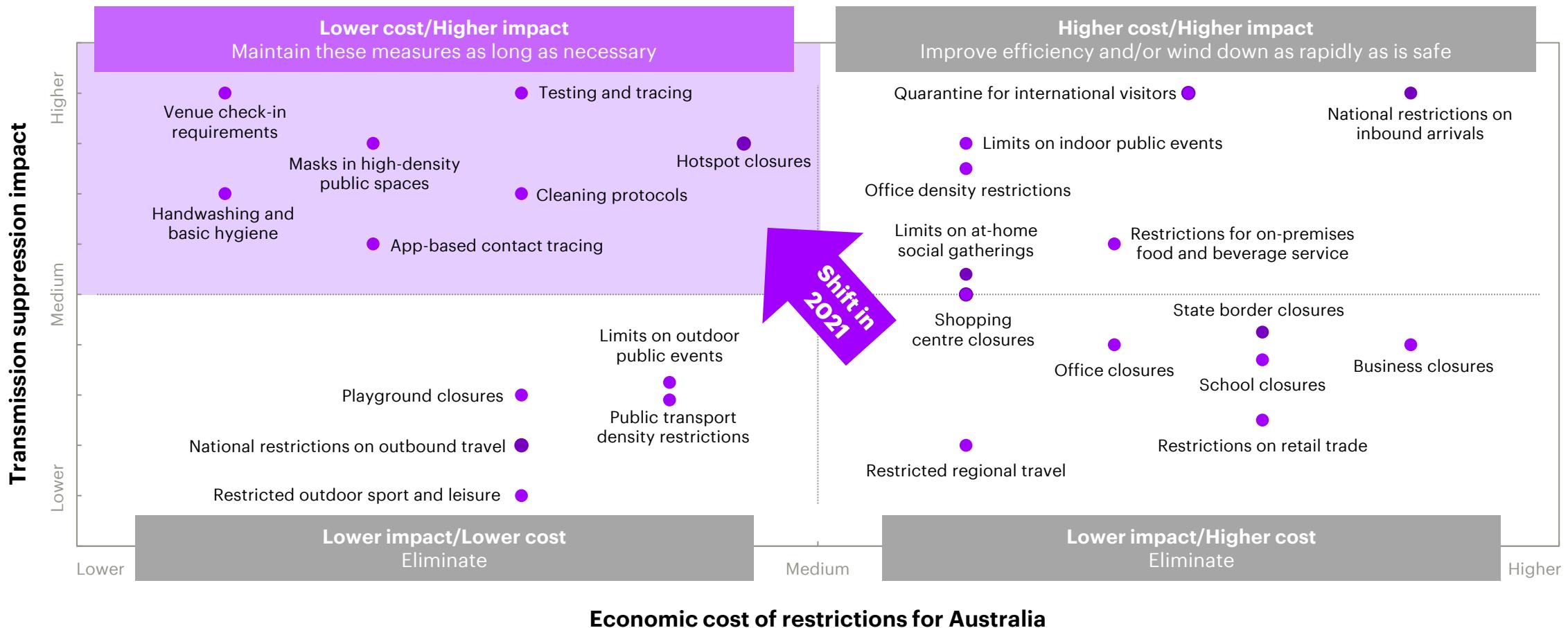
- Millions of dollars have been lost in hotel and accommodation cancellations.<sup>19</sup>
- Passenger numbers have dropped over 90% across popular domestic air routes.<sup>18</sup>

**These costs can be mitigated**

Governments can reduce the costs of state border closures by:

- Providing clear and consistent national border closure guidelines and communicating them clearly
- Adopting a national hotspot response approach
- Restricting targeted hotspots, rather than imposing blanket state closures
- Using best practice contact tracing to reduce reliance on border closures as the main tool for managing outbreaks.

# In 2021, Australia needs to shift towards higher-impact restrictions that impose lower costs on the economy and community



## Case study | Border restrictions: National Rail Freight Operator

### Situation

The Victorian Government released its New South Wales Border Crossing Permit Scheme Directions (the Direction) on 20 December 2020, in response to the Northern Beaches outbreak.

Although early iterations of the Direction simply referenced adherence to the National Freight Code, subsequent versions imposed an onerous 14-day self-quarantine restriction on Victorian essential freight workers. This restriction was inconsistent with the Code which clearly states essential “workers will not need to go into quarantine or formal self-isolation in any state or territory while they are waiting for the results of a COVID-19 test”.

The Direction requiring Victorian-based essential workers to self-quarantine for a full 14 days when not providing freight services while at home in Victoria quickly caused alarm among the state’s essential freight workforce and directly contributed to the cancellation of six critical north-bound freight trains over a 24-hour period, delaying the transportation of between 1,200 and 1,800 TEU (twenty-foot equivalent units, or shipping containers) of essential freight.

### Complications

Over a 48-hour period in early January, after updated versions of the Directions and Permits had become increasingly restrictive, 25 per cent of this operator’s Victorian-based frontline workforce did not attend work—notably in the interstate intermodal (containerised freight) space.

These essential workers were either concerned they would not be able to adhere to the full 14-day quarantine requirement, or they had been incorrectly directed to isolate by an “authorised officer” after seeking asymptomatic testing to comply with the Direction. Over the Christmas and New Year period, private and public testing clinics in Victoria had begun directing essential freight workers accessing asymptomatic testing that they had to quarantine either until they returned a negative result—or in some cases for a full 14 days—because they had entered NSW. This was again inconsistent with the National Code.

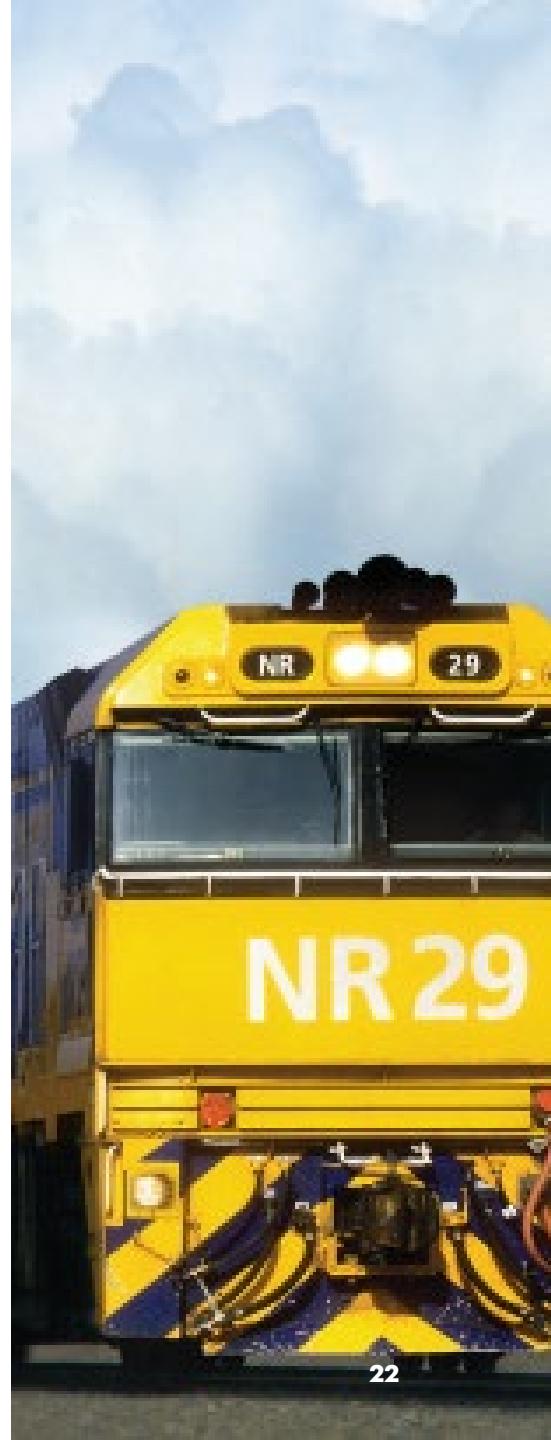
If this issue had dragged on for another 24 hours, this rail operator would have had to completely suspend its Victorian interstate intermodal service as it would not have had enough train crew available to deliver its services as a direct result of the quarantine and testing requirements. This would have derailed Australia’s supply chain as Melbourne is a key ‘through-put’ state connecting the east-west (Melbourne-Adelaide-Perth) and north-south (Melbourne-Sydney-Brisbane) corridors. Every cancelled service from Melbourne effectively means a return service is not able to run.

### Outcome

The issue was escalated with Victorian Government ministers, advisers and Freight Victoria over the Christmas and New Year break. Although the issue was not immediately addressed in subsequent updates of the Directions, an industry briefing was held with Freight Victoria and Victoria’s Department of Health and Human Services (DHSS) officials on 6 January, after service impacts had reached a head.

Road and rail stakeholders outlined the serious impacts the Direction was having on freight operations in Victoria. During this meeting and in the meeting minutes that followed, industry and employee representatives were assured by Government that the Directions would be updated to reflect the intent of the Freight Code and there would be no enforcement of the Directions in the meantime, allowing services to resume.

On 7 January, Victoria’s Acting Chief Health Officer signed Direction No.8, explicitly removing the self-quarantine requirement for commercial freight workers, resolving the issue. Advice around testing was also clarified within DHSS to ensure no further misinformation at testing clinics.





**Priority 3**

# **Provide more forward guidance and support for heavily affected industries**

## Priority 3

# Provide more forward guidance and support for heavily affected industries

## The problem

Many Australian industries have been disrupted by COVID-19. Australian businesses and governments worked together during the crisis to rapidly develop protocols and workarounds to continue essential services and keep businesses open.

Although many industries are returning to close-to-normal operations, many businesses—especially those in tourism, aviation, education, the arts and other heavily affected industries—continue to experience extensive disruption.

In several industries, business will not be able to reopen properly in 2021 unless they have clear and transparent guidance and support from government.

## The way ahead

Heavily affected industries need more guidance and support to give them confidence to reopen as quickly as safety allows.

### **3.1 Provide more forward guidance to reduce uncertainty:**

Government and business need to work together to determine how key elements of the economy will operate in 2021 and beyond as the vaccine is rolled out. Significantly more planning, transparency and guidance is needed regarding international travel protocols, vaccine plans, international student arrivals, skilled migration, major events and tourism. Without more forward guidance, businesses in affected sectors will not have the certainty they need to reopen.

### **3.2 Deliver financial support for affected industries:**

As the government has done throughout the pandemic, it should continue to work with heavily impacted industries and extend targeted support as appropriate.

## Case study

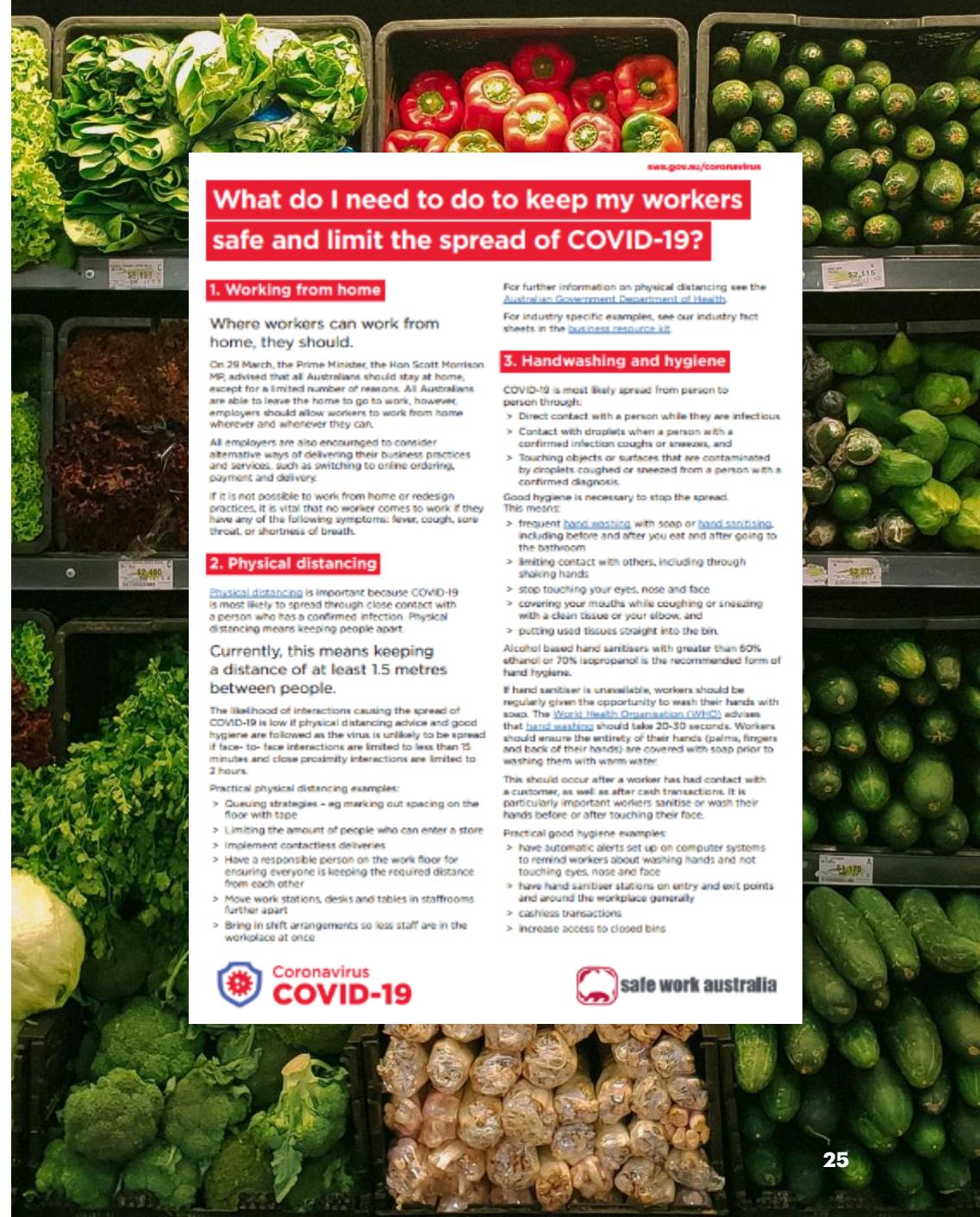
# Business and government collaboration: Supermarkets

The Supermarkets Taskforce, under the umbrella of the Department of Home Affairs, was established in March 2020 to respond to challenges facing supermarkets arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, and to coordinate supermarket responses across the nation.<sup>20</sup>

The Taskforce comprises several working groups and members spanning government, regulatory authorities, industry associations, supermarkets and national retailers.<sup>20</sup>

Between March and May 2020, the Taskforce met almost 50 times, and was crucial in coordinating industry reactions and acting collaboratively to meet the demands of ‘panic buying’ experienced in the early weeks of the pandemic.<sup>20</sup>

The Taskforce has also helped shaped the guidelines for COVID-19 safe workplaces.<sup>21</sup>



# In several industries, business cannot reopen properly in 2021 unless they have clear and transparent guidance and plans from government

	Sample of areas where business is looking for forward guidance from government	Responsible agencies	Status
<b>Understanding how vaccine roll-out will secure the safety of international arrivals and freight, through ...</b>	Guidelines for globally accepted vaccines that account for the impact on supply chains and international relationships	National Cabinet; health departments	
	National guidelines and underlying infrastructure for incoming international passengers (including tests or vaccination requirements)	National Cabinet; health departments	
	A vaccination roll-out plan, including a prioritised vaccination schedule for high-risk groups <sup>22</sup>	National Cabinet; health departments	Green
<b>Establishing transparent and consistent state border and local restrictions, with ...</b>	Criteria for domestic border closure agreed by all federal and state governments	National Cabinet	
	National thresholds for initiating hotspot closures defined and agreed by all federal and state governments	National Cabinet	Yellow
	National hotspot definitions determined and agreed by all federal and state governments	National Cabinet	Yellow
<b>Planning for opening international borders while maintaining health outcomes, by ...</b>	Adopting separate entry quotas for international students <sup>23</sup> and skilled workers	Health departments; Australian Border Force; Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications; Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	Yellow
	Implementing an ongoing, automated and sophisticated national contact tracing method, capable of managing an increase in arrivals into Australia	National Cabinet; health departments	

Note: This is a non-exhaustive list of forward guidance.

Source: Consultations.<sup>22</sup>Health.gov.au: Australia's COVID-19 vaccine national roll-out strategy; <sup>23</sup>The Australian

A photograph of a family of three standing on a sandy beach. A woman in a blue patterned dress stands on the left, a young girl in a blue striped dress stands in the center, and a man in a blue and white checkered shirt and shorts stands on the right. They are all facing away from the camera, looking towards the ocean. The ocean waves are crashing onto the shore in front of them. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

**Beyond 2021  
Ensure Australia  
emerges stronger and  
healthier after COVID-19**

# Ensuring we emerge stronger

Australians showed their capacity to self-sacrifice for the common good in 2020.

We should harness this spirit and learn the lessons of COVID-19, to emerge stronger and more resilient for the future.



## Improve hygiene norms beyond COVID-19

- Normalise mask use during illness, to protect the general public against airborne viruses including colds and flus.
- Increase the frequency of everyday handwashing and cleaning protocols.

## Business support for workplace wellness

- Businesses should provide flexibility or leave for workers affected by infectious diseases.

## Be ready for future viruses

- Adopt flexible and digital business models and ways of working.
- Implement ongoing, automated contact tracing.
- Secure key medical equipment and supplies and enhance local 'sovereign' capabilities.

**Australia should come out of COVID-19 as a healthier, more resilient society that is better able to manage the costs of a range of infectious diseases.**



Every year in Australia, common influenza results in ...

**48,276**  
cases<sup>25, 26</sup>

**310,000 GP**  
consultations<sup>24</sup>

**18,000**  
hospital admissions<sup>24</sup>



Due to the impact on workers, this costs Australia (AUD) ...

**\$7 billion**  
in lost wages<sup>25, 26</sup>

**\$34 billion**  
in lost productivity<sup>25, 26</sup>

**\$85 million**  
in government spending<sup>24</sup>

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