



COVID-19 Social and Economic Support Measures Update

July 2020



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BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on Tasmania, both socially and economically. The Tasmanian Government is committed to supporting the community during this challenging time and has put in place a range of measures to assist businesses and the community.

The Tasmanian Government released two social and economic support packages in response to COVID-19 on 17 and 26 March 2020. The two packages, totaling approximately \$1 billion, complement the Australian Government's multi-billion dollar response, and are of a scale not seen in the history of the State in both the amount of funding and the breadth of measures.

The first package, totalling approximately \$420 million, focused on providing immediate relief and assistance to individuals, households and businesses.

The second package, totalling approximately \$565 million, included more economic and social support measures targeted at the health system, businesses and jobs; households and individuals; and community organisations.

Infrastructure projects will be an important part of recovery activities in Tasmania. The Tasmanian Government intends to bring forward projects as well as identifying new project opportunities to assist in rebuilding the economy and support jobs.

On 4 June 2020, the Government announced its infrastructure investment package to reboot the Tasmanian economy and support approximately 15,000 jobs. The package builds on the Government's current infrastructure package of \$1.8 billion over the next two years, and in total will support an estimated construction value of \$3.1 billion across the next two years.

On 14 July 2020, the Government announced an Interim Trade Action Plan, supported by an additional \$2.65 million, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic trade disruption. The Plan provides specific trade initiatives to address the immediate needs for exporters over the next six months.

This document provides a progress update on the implementation of the social and economic support measures.



SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUALS, HOUSEHOLDS AND THE COMMUNITY

Emergency relief

Pandemic Isolation Assistance Grants

The Tasmanian Government is providing financial assistance to low-income individuals and families who are required by Public Health to self-isolate due to COVID-19 risk. A one-off payment is available to those eligible (\$250 per adult, \$125 per child, with a maximum of \$1,000 per household).

As at 26 July 2020, 295 emergency assistance grants had been paid to Tasmanians.

Targeted support to people in self-isolation and Government quarantine

The Government has funded community sector organisations such as The Salvation Army, Rural Business Tasmania and the Australian Red Cross to provide food hampers, financial counselling, and psychosocial support to people in self-isolation.

Red Cross has also provided wellbeing checks and psychosocial support to those in government quarantine, and are offering this service to those who are now self-isolating at home. The Salvation Army has been providing food parcels to those in self isolation, and those arriving at airports and the TT Line terminal. Rural Business Tasmania is supporting rural communities with essential items.

As at 23 July 2020, 14,095 wellbeing calls and 417 referrals had been made by the Red Cross and The Salvation Army had delivered over 150 hampers and essential items as a result of referral from the Tasmanian Government.

Emergency accommodation for vulnerable people

The Government is providing emergency accommodation to vulnerable individuals and families on low incomes who are required by Public Health to self-isolate due to COVID-19 risk, but who are unable to stay at their regular place of residence or are homeless.

As at 1 July 2020, 80 people have been provided with emergency accommodation.

Emergency food relief

Under the Local Emergency Food Relief COVID-19 Grants Program, funding of up to \$10,000 was made available to eligible organisations to deliver emergency food relief to Tasmanians in need in their local community. This Grants Program will enable them to deliver much-needed support to local communities, while operating within the current restrictions. Grants were available in two categories: Category 1 for organisations which provide low-cost ready-to-eat meals following current restrictions; and Category 2 for organisations which have new or changed food hamper services as a result of COVID-19 restrictions.

A total of 39 applications requesting \$321,104 were received by the closing date of 31 May 2020. On 26 June 2020, it was announced that 28 applications would receive a total of \$211,035. As at 31 July 2020, 26 grant agreements had been executed, with funding paid to 23 organisations to date (totalling \$175,682).

The Tasmanian Government has also partnered with a network of emergency food relief providers:

- \$130,000 has been paid to Volunteering Tasmania to rapidly recruit and deploy volunteers, develop COVID-19 resources for volunteer organisations and work with local councils to co-design a community volunteer response to COVID-19. As at 24 July 2020, Volunteering Tasmania had increased the numbers of individuals registered in their EV-CREW database from 1,242 to 2,451 individuals, and deployed 140 individuals to volunteering organisations.
- \$144,000 has been paid to Hamlet to provide ready to eat meals to Hobart City Mission and Safe Night Space. In the month of June 2020, Hamlet provided 1,200 meals.



- \$156,000 has been paid to Loaves and Fishes to increase production of hampers and ready to eat meals. During July 2020, Loaves and Fishes delivered 479 hampers, 12,020 ready to eat meals, and 78,754 kgs of staple and fresh items.
- \$100,000 has been paid to Waterbridge Food Company to increase production and distribution of meals and vegetable boxes to the Bridgewater community. In the month of July 2020, Waterbridge provided 70 meals and 38 vegetable boxes.
- \$198,873 has been provided to the Meals on Wheels Association of Tasmania to allow it to upscale business operations to respond to the increased demand as a result of COVID-19. This includes meal production and storage, workforce, transportation, client services and business continuity measures.
- An additional \$51,127 has been provided to the Australian Red Cross Society to ensure older people and younger people have access to nutritious meals and are able to continue living independently in their own home and community during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- \$100,000 has been provided to increase FoodBank's supplies and deliveries to those in need. In the month to 27 July 2020, Foodbank had delivered 2,138 hampers and 80,600 kilograms of fresh and staple items.

Community transport

The Government has provided \$260,000 to Community Transport Services Tasmania (CTST) to enable the organisation to maintain and increase essential transport services during the COVID-19 pandemic. CTST has reported 1,844 additional trips related to COVID-19 between April-June 2020.

Housing and homelessness support

Rent assistance for those suffering extreme hardship

Targeted support of up to \$2,000 or four weeks rent is available for tenants covered by the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997* who are suffering from extreme hardship. Assistance is available to tenants experiencing COVID-19 related hardship and are in rental stress, that is, they are paying more than 30 per cent of their income in rent and have less than \$5,000 in savings.

As at 31 July 2020:

- The Government has received applications for 1050 individuals across 861 properties;
- 414 applications for 613 individual tenants have progressed for final assessment; and
- 431 individuals been approved and paid so far at a cost of just over \$341,000.

Private Rental Incentive Scheme

The Government has increased funding to the Private Rental Incentive Scheme to increase the pool of available houses under the Scheme. This will assist in meeting the needs of those on the housing register. The additional \$2 million will allow a further 75 properties to be provided under the Scheme.

As at 31 July 2020, a further 14 properties were secured and five households assisted. This is part of a broader target for the Private Rental Incentives program of 200 households to be assisted overall by 31 December 2020.

Halt on residential evictions and rent increases

The *Residential Tenancy Act 1997* was amended for an 'emergency period' to put in place a halt on residential evictions and rent increases until 30 September 2020.



Rent relief for social housing tenants

The Government has not increased rent for social housing tenants and will not count Australian and Tasmanian Governments' emergency payments as income for the purposes of calculating rent contributions. This will provide around 11,500 households across Tasmania in social housing with more money in their hands during these difficult times, at a cost of around \$6.7 million to the Government.

Accommodation for frontline workers

Emergency hotel accommodation is available for frontline workers who directly deliver essential health, welfare and biosecurity services if they need to stay away from home. There were 40 occasions of service provided to frontline workers with a total expenditure as at 31 July 2020 of \$23,195.

Safe Night Space

The Government committed \$2.62 million to expand the current Safe Night Space pilot, which currently provides a safe, overnight place for those sleeping rough in Hobart. The program has been extended to cover Launceston and Burnie as well as Hobart, and from an overnight service into a 24/7 full wrap around support service. In the month of July 2020:

- The Hobart Safe Space provided 515 bed nights for 60 individuals and 1,162 day time contacts for 96 individuals;
- The Safe Space in Launceston provided 143 bed nights and 543 day time contacts.
- The Safe Space in Burnie commenced in late July 2020 and information on its progress will be included in next month's report.

Under 16 homelessness

The Government committed \$502,000 to support young people who are under 16 and at risk of homelessness by increasing capacity to deliver services. To support the delivery of this an Under-16 Homelessness Working Group has been established to oversee the implementation of the recommendations of the U/16 Homelessness Taskforce. The Working Group comprises government and non-government representatives and held its first meeting on 24 June 2020. The Working Group has an initial focus on policy development and protocols.

Uncapped brokerage accommodation

An additional \$300,000 has been allocated to uncapped brokerage to assist Housing Connect's capacity to provide statewide emergency accommodation for homeless people to self-isolate in hotels, motels and caravan parks.

Increased mental health support for homeless clients

An additional \$826,000 has been allocated for increased mental health and wrap around support services for homeless clients of Housing Connect and shelters during the emergency period. Dedicated referrals between Housing Connect and health screening/mental health care is considered a very positive step towards long term broader service integration.

As at 31 July 2020, the Mental Health Homeless Outreach Support Team had commenced operations and 31 referrals for health screening had been received from Housing Connect.

Protecting vulnerable people

Family violence

Safe at Home is the Tasmanian Government's integrated criminal justice response to family violence. It involves a range of services working together to protect and support victims of family violence, including young people and children, while making offenders responsible for their behaviour.



The Government has provided \$1.92 million across Safe at Home services, including:

- increased staffing for the Court Support and Liaison Service to support survivors navigate and engage in the court process thereby holding offenders accountable;
- continuation of a dedicated Safe at Home Legal Practitioner in the North-West of Tasmania to support and advise survivors of family violence;
- increased capacity for the Family Violence Counselling and Support Service to deliver the extended hours service; increased staffing of the Adult Program to proactively engage with victim-survivors of family violence and enhance their safety; and continuation of increased staffing for the Children and Young Persons' Program to support children to recover from family violence;
- increased resources for the Magistrates Court to support the efficient progress of family violence matters through the criminal justice system and engagement with Safe at Home;
- additional specialist Safe at Home Police Prosecution in the South and North-West to support the criminal justice process; and
- increased capacity for the Safe at Home Coordination Unit to increase the efficiency of Safe at Home.

The Rapid Rehousing program is an existing Government policy under the Affordable Housing Action Plan and the Safe Homes, Families, Communities: Tasmania's action plan for family and sexual violence 2019-2022. As at 31 July 2020, eight properties had been secured and four households had been assisted into Family Violence Rapid Rehousing funded under COVID-19, with \$17,000 expended.

Flexible Support Packages (FSPs) were launched on 27 April 2020 and as at 30 June 2020, 35 applications totalling \$99,967 had been approved across the State. FSPs provide up to \$6,000 to victim-survivors of family violence to purchase basic items such as food or clothing, to pay utilities or phone bills, to cover medical or pharmaceutical costs, for relocation costs, furnishings and whitegoods or emergency accommodation.

Community-based specialist family violence support services received funding to increase their operational capacity and respond to increased demand for services. A total of \$310,000 (\$62,000 per service) was provided to Yemaya Women's Support Service, Engender Equality, Huon Domestic Violence, Anglicare (Relationship Abuse of an Intimate Nature) and Safe Choices.

The new Safe from Violence website (www.safefromviolence.tas.gov.au) was launched on 16 June 2020, to provide a central portal of information and links to support services for those impacted by family and sexual violence, and/or seeking support for themselves or others. The website includes a suite of resources developed to support those impacted by family and sexual violence during the COVID-19 pandemic including posters, postcards and fact sheets. \$100,000 was allocated to support primary prevention and awareness raising efforts that communicate COVID-19 does not cause, justify or excuse family and sexual violence and to promote specialist services available to provide support.

Vulnerable children

As at 30 June 2020:

- \$250,000 has been paid to foster and formal kinship carers to support cleaning and hygiene measures;
- \$70,000 has been allocated to Foster and Kinship Carers Tasmania (FKAT) to liaise with Kin Raising Kids Tasmania to develop and support advocacy and training services to informal kinship carers and improve FKAT's service of support and assistance to informal kinship carers.
- \$130,000 has been allocated for review and implementation of an informal kinship care liaison and support function. Terms of reference are being finalised for this project.
- The ICT Fund received 72 applications and 58 were approved. The majority of the applications requested laptops or iPads.



- The Carer Support Hotline and the After Hours Response Service has been extended. Current demand for after-hours support is being monitored to ensure an appropriate response can be provided when required.
- Sixteen applications have been received for the Flexible Active Family Fund. Thirteen applications have been approved totalling \$3,250.
- A funding agreement for enhanced engagement and advocacy for children in care has been prepared with CREATE for 1 July 2020 - 31 December 2020. The purpose of the funding is to contribute to the delivery of 32 care placements and crisis accommodation statewide.
- The Department of Education, partnering with the Department of Communities Tasmania, is providing students who do not have access to a computer or internet access with a computer and sim card/internet dongle.

Mental health support

Lifeline

The Government committed \$875,000 to establish a dedicated 1800 phone number to allow Tasmanians to call and receive specific support regarding the impact of COVID-19, as well as a proactive call out service to reach out to at-risk communities and industries.

The new Lifeline Service (1800 98 44 34 – A Tasmanian Lifeline) commenced on 1 May 2020. The service provides wellbeing support for Tasmanians, many of whom would not have previously sought support and who are experiencing psychological distress during the pandemic. The service continues to see increases in the call volume, particularly for those who are experiencing social isolation and loss. Loss is experienced in many forms including job loss, loss of normality, loss of contact with loved ones and loss of plans and hopes.

The end of the second month of operations has seen the calls increase to over 250 calls. Women continue to be the main users of the service (nearly 70 percent of all calls).

Older Tasmanians are still the most likely to make a call, and increasingly there is a trend for the older demographic to be located in regions outside of Hobart, Burnie and Launceston. The smallest group of users, aged 18-25, are more likely to be living in inner city areas of Launceston and Hobart.

Rural Alive and Well

\$240,000 has been provided to Rural Alive and Well (RAW) to increase capacity to provide mental health advice, support and referral for vulnerable Tasmanians living in rural areas during the pandemic.

RAW has increased its workforce by two full time staff members, one based on the North West Coast and the other in the Central and Southern Highlands. RAW has had 1,657 interactions with clients across Tasmania in the period between 1 April and 15 July 2020, compared to 1,131 interactions for the same period last year.

RAW staff have been actively engaging with communities to provide assertive outreach and to ensure that RAW is highly visible, approachable and accessible for those that require its support that otherwise would fall through the gaps and potentially become a suicide statistic because they didn't know where to go for help.

Migrant Resource Centre

\$120,000 has been provided to the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) to provide targeted support to Tasmania's migrant community during the pandemic.

The Cultural Community Connections (CCC) Program, delivered in collaboration with the Phoenix Centre and MRC, has produced a number of mental health resources ('Be Kind to your Mind,' 'Staying Emotionally Healthy at Home' and 'Parenting in Uncertain Times'), which have been translated into 12 languages.



The CCC Program also arranged consultation sessions and training for MRC bi-cultural staff around the impact of COVID-19 on their communities, and provided them with resources to assist them in directing community members to appropriate linkages and support, such as A Tasmanian Lifeline and the Phoenix Centre.

In response to consultation with community groups, leaders and influencers on the issues their communities are facing, the CCC Program has initiated:

- The development of targeted resources for parents with children, after it was identified that parents with children were finding the restrictions of COVID-19 challenging.
- Information sessions on employment options for migrants, as this has been a key area of increased and urgent need.
- Continual updating of the MRC Tas website as a key location for CALD communities to find up to date information (in language) on COVID-19 Government directions. This information has also been provided to MRC Tas community influencers/leaders to share amongst their communities.
- Consultation with MRC Tas community influencers on identified strengths within their community – highlighting the importance of these protective factors during uncertain times.
- The provision of wellbeing packs (delivered to people's homes), where it was identified that isolation was extreme, increasing the risk of deteriorating mental health.
- Information sessions to provide people with employment concerns targeted support, including resume support and job opportunities.
- The provision of information sessions to vulnerable community members on areas of concern including housing, migration, and volunteering to increase their employment skills.
- The development of wellbeing messages for individuals and communities in Tasmania, as well as making these resources available via social media for individuals to be able to share with family members in country of origin.
- The development of *Living with Worry and Anxiety Amidst Global Uncertainty* (Psychology Tools, 2020) into a booklet in 10 languages to provide additional psychosocial education to communities in need.
- The provision of mindfulness and emotional regulation activities and strategies for CALD individuals via group work, MRC Tas (Phoenix Centre) website and in individual sessions.

Mental Health Council of Tasmania

\$450,000 has been provided to the Mental Health Council of Tasmania to support Community Managed Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug Providers that are funded by the Tasmanian Department of Health or Primary Health Tasmania to use technology to adapt to alternate methods of delivery for existing services.

A grant process was run by the Mental Health Council during April 2020 with 52 organisational applications received, of which 36 were successful. Common technology items purchased included laptops and iPads (for staff and clients), videoconferencing hardware, mobile data (for staff and clients) and telehealth or videoconferencing software.

In evaluating the technology fund:

- 83 per cent of organisations indicated the technology fund addressed the need they had to a great or very great extent in order to continue service delivery.
- 70 per cent said the contribution of the technology fund in ensuring ongoing service delivery was great or very great.



- 95 per cent of organisations plan to continue to utilise service delivery methods adopted during the pandemic as a result of capabilities established or enhanced with the technology fund.

Assistance with living expenses

Capped utility costs

In order to assist households and businesses on regulated electricity tariffs, the Government committed to cap regulated electricity prices for 2020-21 to ensure that they do not increase over 2019-20 prices. Regulated electricity prices fell by 1.38 per cent from 1 July 2020.

Affordable finance for goods and services

The Government has provided \$1 million to the No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) to support low income families to obtain affordable finance for goods and services. The Government investment has enabled NILS to respond to the urgent need for vulnerable families to purchase technology to enable online learning for their children. NILS Tasmania and its 66 community organisation partners, such as Neighbourhood Houses, The Salvation Army and City Mission, have worked hard to quickly adapt to enabling loan applications via the phone rather than face to face due to lockdown restrictions so that no one missed out at this important time.

As at 30 June 2020, \$500,000 had been provided to NILs During the April-June quarter. NILs reported an increase in loan output by 19.5% compared to the 2018-19 average, despite the need for delivery partners to adapt to COVID-19 restrictions such as phone interviews and process on-line purchases.

School levy relief

On 26 March 2020, the Tasmanian Government announced school levy relief for all parents/carers in Tasmanian Government Schools. The School Levy Relief for 2020 provides total relief to the school community of approximately \$14 million.

As at 31 July 2020, the Government had refunded approximately \$9 million to parents through the School Levy Relief. This has supported approximately 21,000 parents.

A further decision was made in June to waive individual historical debts totalling approximately \$2.8 million, to further support families in resetting their financial plans during the recovery phase.

Fee relief for international students

The Department of Education has also foregone an estimated \$288,000 in revenue to provide a COVID-19 Fee Relief Program for Temporary Residents, introduced to offer financial support for migrant families who are experiencing hardship.

The Fee Relief Program provides fee paying Temporary Residents with a 25 per cent discount on their Term 2 and Term 3 tuition fees.

In addition, 36 requests have been received for further financial support including payment pauses and fee waivers. \$250,000 has been allocated to support current and future requests.

To support additional costs associated with hosting international students, additional payments of \$150 per international student were paid to host families. Approximately 150 payments have been made, totalling \$22,500.

Support for community organisations and groups

Tasmanian Council of Social Services (TasCOSS)

The Government has provided \$100,000 to TasCOSS to help ensure Tasmanian community sector organisations (including frontline community sector staff) are joined-up and connected to continue to provide services and/or adapt business models to continue to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic.



This coordinating role includes providing advice and resources to the community sector to adapt service delivery and support clients; and representing the sector by advising Government on the impacts and needs arising in the community as a result of the pandemic.

Volunteering Tasmania

\$130,000 has been provided to Volunteering Tasmania to:

- rapidly recruit and deploy volunteers through the EVCREW;
- develop resources for volunteer organisations and volunteers regarding volunteering during COVID-19;
- work with local councils, including the Devonport City Council, Clarence City Council and Huon Valley Council, to co-design a community volunteer response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Neighbourhood Houses

The Tasmanian Government recognises that Neighbourhood Houses provide essential voluntary community programs, and a need for this will continue during this time. Therefore, additional funding of \$700,000 was allocated to the Neighbourhood House Network to support ongoing community development work during the pandemic response.

This means each of Tasmania's 34 Neighbourhood Houses has received an additional \$20,000 to support their community, and the peak body Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania received \$20,000 in recognition of the work it is undertaking to support the network in adjusting to the COVID-19 business requirements and their participation in the emergency response and future recovery.

The additional funding is being used to add capacity to Neighbourhood Houses to meet the needs of their local communities, with a focus on connection, information resourcing, wellbeing and community resilience.

Men's Sheds

Funding has been provided to assist the Tasmanian Men's Shed Association to communicate with members in relation to COVID-19, with particular focus on COVID Safe Workplaces.

As at 24 June 2020, 35 Men's Sheds are open and 22 remain closed with the majority planning to open over the next four to six weeks. A number are using this time to undertake renovations.

Returned servicemen's leagues and ex-service organisations

The Supporting Our Veterans – COVID-19 Grants Program is providing up to \$500,000 to eligible RSLs and ex-service organisations.

Ten applications were received under the reopened program, taking the total allocation under the Grants Program to \$418,918 to 52 organisations (53 projects funded, with Devonport RSL Sub-Branch receiving two grants). At 31 July 2020, 41 grant agreements had been executed, with \$326,790 paid.

Sport and Recreation COVID-19 Grants Program

Under the Sport and Recreation COVID-19 Grants Program Tranche 1, 29 applications were received, requesting a total of \$4,382,333. Twenty-five grants totalling \$1,915,218 were approved to support a total of 187 jobs, with four applications unsuccessful due to Jobkeeper covering employee costs. Deeds have been finalised with all recipients.

Tranche 2 of the Grants Program opened on 29 June 2020, providing funding of up to \$3,000 to sport and active recreation clubs for the purchase of equipment or supplies necessary to ensure a safe return to play under the organisation's COVID-19 safety or Return to Play plan.

As at 31 July 2020, 329 applications have been received, with funding of \$272 891 allocated to 127 organisations. Funding documentation is being developed for these organisations, with the remaining applications received under the program to date being assessed.



Essential Technology Fund Grants Program

TasCOSS, on behalf of the Department of Communities Tasmania, has awarded 62 grants to eligible community sector organisations to support the purchase of IT infrastructure and connectivity. An additional \$100,000 grant deed was paid on 3 July 2020.

Support for temporary visa holders

Temporary Visa Holders are being supported by the Government through the provision of emergency assistance grants; emergency relief services through partner organisations; assistance to return to their country of citizenship; and employer assistance payments.

Emergency relief

As at 26 July 2020, 4,084 grants have been paid to Temporary Visa Holders. As at 31 July 2020, a total of 1,318,900 was expended on grants to Temporary Visa Holders.

Funding of \$500,000 has been split between non-government organisations CatholicCare Tasmania, Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania, Migrant Resource Centre North, St Vincent de Paul and Multicultural Council of Tasmania to provide emergency relief, assistance and information to temporary visa holders statewide.

Assistance to return to country of citizenship

Temporary Visa Holders facing hardship who wished to return to their country of citizenship are being provided with assistance.

A total of 135 applications (128 individuals, six couples and one family) for assistance were received. As at 31 July 2020:

- 23 applications have been finalised, with 26 people provided with assistance to return to their countries of citizenship;
- a further 11 applications have been assessed as eligible, pending availability of flights;
- 96 applications were withdrawn (where applicants have either funded their own travel, selected to remain in Tasmania, or were unable to be contacted); and
- five applications have been assessed as ineligible.

Skilled Employee Assistance Program

Employers of Temporary Visa Holders have access to the Temporary Visa Holder Skilled Employees Assistance Program. Under this program grants of \$2,000 help skilled temporary visa holders maintain a connection with their employers during COVID-19. The focus is on employees with skills and experience that make them critical to the business continuing or resuming trade as COVID-19 restrictions are eased.

Applications opened on 3 June 2020 and closed on 16 June 2020 for employees and 19 June 2020 for employers. The program supported 349 applicants.

Enabling access to information

The Council on the Ageing (COTA) continues to work with the Government's Public Information Unit (PIU) to develop communications materials for older Tasmanians – including ensuring that critical information is provided in multiple formats such as by paper, over the phone, and radio. COTA has also been part of the development of a national hotline for older people.

The Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT) has launched a media campaign regarding COVID-19 aimed at young people called 'You(th) Got This.' Materials including posters and social media promotion is being distributed through networks including the Department of Education social media sites.



SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES AND THE ECONOMY

Fee and tax relief

Government fees and charges

The Government is freezing all fees and charges subject to the *Fee Units Act 1997*. For 2020-21 the Fee Unit rate will be the same as in 2019-20. Accordingly, all fees and charges which are based on Fee Units will be frozen for 2020-21. The estimated cost in revenue foregone is approximately \$430,000.

Payroll tax

As at 31 July 2020:

- 354 applications had been approved by the State Revenue Office for the 2019-20 payroll tax waiver for Tasmanian employers with wages of up to \$5 million, with a total refund of approximately \$12.5 million paid to date;
- 55 applications had been approved by the State Revenue Office for the 2019-20 payroll tax waiver for Tasmanian hospitality, tourism, and seafood industry employers, with a total refund of approximately \$13.1 million paid to date;
- there are 16 registrants for the payroll tax rebate for wages for employees aged between 15 and 24 who commence between 1 April 2020 and 31 December 2020; and
- the Government has waived payroll tax due on wages attributable to the JobKeeper payments, commencing from 30 March 2020. The Tasmanian Government will continue to provide its waiver until JobKeeper payments cease on 28 March 2021.

Land tax

The Government is waiving land tax for 2020-21 for commercial property owners that have been adversely financially impacted by COVID-19. The actual reduction in revenue will be identified when land tax assessment notices are calculated throughout the 2020-21 financial year with an estimate of up to \$43 million.

As at 31 July 2020, 416 applications for deferral of land tax due to financial hardship have been received, all of which had been processed. Deferrals ceased on 30 June 2020.

The Government has also waived land tax in 2019-20 for taxpayers that have a land tax liability of less than \$150. It is estimated that this will assist 3,332 taxpayers to a value of \$338,226.

Motor tax and vehicle registration

The Government is waiving the roads component of motor tax and vehicle registration fees where a business has been significantly impacted by measures taken to manage COVID-19. Businesses looking to suspend trade or that are experiencing significant trading restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic can access the Business Vehicle Registration Relief Package. For heavy vehicles, businesses can apply to freeze or extend for 12 months and for light vehicles businesses can apply to freeze vehicle registration.

As at 13 July 2020:

- 135 businesses have applied for heavy vehicle registration extensions and 633 vehicles have been processed.
- 298 businesses have applied for light and/or heavy vehicle fee relief and 2,307 vehicles have been processed.

Registrations can be reactivated at no cost to the business when it restarts.



For heavy vehicles (over 4.5 tonnes) the Government will waive fees for registration and the road component of motor tax for 12 months. Operators will still need to pay the regulatory component of motor tax which goes to fund the operations of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator.

Liquor and gaming licences and permits

The Government is waiving fees associated with liquor and gaming licences and permits to assist businesses. As at 31 July 2020, 1,110 applications for liquor licences and permit refunds have been processed, resulting in refunds of \$515,801; and 284 special permits have been issued at no cost, saving permit applicants \$64,039. As at 31 July 2020, fee waivers in relation to gaming have amounted to \$1,438,734.

Taxi licence fees

The Government has waived annual taxi licence fees for the calendar year 2020 at a cost of \$240,000. As at 23 June 2020, 282 licence fee refunds have been processed, with only five licences remaining eligible for refund.

In addition, a number of additional taxi support initiatives have been adopted by the Government, including Taxi free rebates which has seen administration fees contained in the *Taxi and Hire Vehicle Industries Act 2003* waived and not payable for 2020. Refunds of fees already paid are being progressed.

The Taxi Industry registration relief for vehicle registration falling between 1 March and 30 September 2020 means taxi operators can either 1) continue operating a vehicle or apply to have their vehicle registration extended for a 12 month period, at no charge or 2) 'pause' the registration of their taxi and later reinstate the registration at no cost, with the 'paused' period being added to the reinstated registration period. Taxis will not be required to pay Public Passenger Vehicle safety inspection (around \$130).

Rent relief

Government leases

For Government leased property (to private/commercial tenants) the Government has waived rents for a period of six months from 1 March 2020. The rent waiver is expected to provide rent relief to the value of approximately \$4.8-\$5 million.

As at 30 June 2020, agencies advised that advice has been provided to 1,039 lease holders, with refunds for rent already paid across the State.

Code of Conduct for commercial tenancies

On 13 May 2020, the *COVID-19 Disease Emergency (Commercial Leases) Act 2020* received Royal Assent. The Act gives effect to the Code of Conduct for commercial tenancies agreed upon by National Cabinet on 7 April 2020.

The purpose of the Code is to govern the conduct of commercial tenants and landlords, and provide additional protections and rent reductions for tenants experiencing financial hardship. Measures include:

- the protection of commercial leases for eligible tenants (a tenant who is eligible for the JobKeeper program and has a turnover of less than \$50 million per annum);
- a freeze on rent increases (a lessor must not, unless agreed by the lessee, increase rent for a protected lease during the financial hardship period);
- rent reductions (the lessor must provide the lessee of a protected lease a reduction in rent in line with the provisions provided in the Code); and
- the establishment of mediation services and a Code Administration Committee to support the Code.

As at 31 July 2020, the Department of Justice had received:

- 106 commercial lease enquiries;



- 10 applications for mediation (tenant as applicant); and
- 4 applications for mediation (landlord as applicant).

Rebate on rent for early education and care providers

The Government has waived, for the six months from March to August 2020, 81 rent agreements for Early Education and Care (ECEC) providers co-located with Schools and Child and Family Centres. These rent agreements total \$205,740, of which \$25,675 has been refunded for payments made by ECEC providers.

A further 35 rental agreements totalling \$140,105, held with other eligible Tasmanian businesses through schools and non school areas have been waived with \$17,830 refunded.

The total amount waived as at 31 July 2020 is \$345,845. The total amount refunded is \$43,505.

Support to businesses

Small Business Sustainability and Recovery Assistance Package

The \$20 million Small Business Sustainability and Recovery Assistance Package announced on 29 July 2020 is designed to help small businesses through the challenges of COVID-19. The Package includes:

- a \$15 million Small Business Sustainability and Recovery Grant program, which opened on 3 August 2020 and will close at 12 noon on 24 August 2020.
- an additional \$2 million for a second round of the Small Business Continuity Grant program, which opened on 10 August 2020 and will close on 7 September 2020, or when the funding has been fully allocated, whichever occurs first.
- \$3 million to enhance existing business support programs, including the Tourism Industry Market Support Program, access to additional free business advice through Enterprise Centres Tasmania, increased access to the Digital Ready for Business Program and additional initiatives to improve access to mental health support for small businesses through a new Mental Health Support Program.

The Small Business Sustainability and Recovery Grant Program is a competitive, merit based program with grants of \$5,000 available based on the decisions made by an independent panel.

The Small Business Continuity Grant Program is a competitive program offering grants of \$750 for eligible businesses to engage the services of suitably qualified specialists to advise them on business continuity planning and provide financial advice to assist with business recovery.

Small Business Emergency Support Grants

The Small Business Emergency Support Grants funding program provides grants of up to \$2,500 to small businesses in hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic. The program funding was extended by \$13 million to \$33 million, and Round Two of the program released on 8 April 2020 broadened the eligibility to include any business impacted rather than restricting it to certain sectors.

Applications for the grant funding closed on 4 May 2020, with 14,382 applications received, of which 13,298 were approved and paid. Funding under this program has now been fully allocated.

Small Business Hardship Grants

The Small Business Hardship Grants program opened on 28 March 2020 and closed on 4 May 2020 with almost 4,000 applications received. Initial funding of \$20 million was allocated to this program to distribute \$15,000 grants to eligible businesses.

1,330 businesses (72 per cent of applicants) were successful in receiving a Grant of \$15,000 each, totalling \$19.95 million. Of these successful applicants, 88 per cent reported realistic future job prospects of 4 FTE and greater and provided a clear plan for continued growth. The remaining 12 per cent of successful applicants



were considered to have an elevated economic or social benefit to the community or were considered essential during the peak of the COVID-19 restrictions.

An additional \$6 million was allocated to this grant program to ensure stimulus funds would reach as many eligible small businesses as possible, bringing the total funding allocated to this program to \$26 million. The additional funding was distributed in smaller hardship grants of \$4,000 to those businesses who did not meet the threshold or qualify to receive a \$15,000 grant. As a result, an additional 1,540 businesses (or 39 per cent of applicants) received grant funding of \$4,000. Without this additional funding these businesses would not have received support.

A high number of applications were received under this program and limited funds resulted in over 1,000 applicants missing out on funding. The assessment process employed under this program was extensive and unfortunately not all applications could be funded.

The Department of State Growth continues to review individual applications of businesses seeking a review or feedback from Business Tasmania in relation to their Small Business Hardship grant application process. As at 31 July 2020, the Department had received 234 application requests and 56 recipients have received additional funding as a result of the review. The Department will continue to directly notify applicants of the outcome of their review.

Small Business Interest Free Loans Scheme

The Small Business Interest Free Loan Scheme provided \$50 million in loans available for businesses with turnovers of less than \$10 million. Applications closed on 11 May 2020 with final submissions due on 25 May 2020.

691 applications were submitted with a total of \$92.676 million in business support requested. Of these, 364 applications were approved with a total of \$35.293 million of support provided.

Business Continuity Grants

The Business Continuity Grant program provided grants up to \$750 for businesses to seek cash flow and continuity advice with \$1.56 million in funding provided. Applications closed on 4 May 2020, with 4,281 applications received, of which 2,080 have been approved and paid.

Digital Ready for Business program

As part of the Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, an additional \$150,000 over two years has been allocated to the highly successful Digital Ready for Business program to help more businesses rapidly transition to online and digital models of commerce, promotion and customer engagement.

Demand for the program increased substantially and between 26 March 2020 and 24 July 2020, 458 two hour one-on-one coaching sessions have been held, compared to 287 sessions for the whole of 2019.

Regional Chambers of Commerce Grant

Funding support of \$100,000 has been allocated to assist Regional Chambers of Commerce to respond to the economic impact of COVID-19 on their members and region, and to lay the foundation for recovery. Applications closed on 30 April 2020 and 13 applications were received. Eleven grants were approved covering 12 chambers (one was a joint application by two Chambers) who each received \$8,330.

The Government has also provided \$80,000 to assist the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI) to provide a workplace relations advisory service to support businesses suffering as a result of COVID-19. Under the grant, the TCCI is providing free advice to support businesses to manage their obligations in relation to their workforce industrial relations issues, including employer obligations, employee entitlements, changing workforce requirements, workplace health and safety and workers compensation. The TCCI is providing a workplace relations helpline (general, non-complex issues) and a workplace relations consultancy service (individualised advice on workplace issues).



As at 31 July 2020, a total of 765 calls had been made to the workplace relations helpline, and a total of 379 enquiries were received with regard to the workplace relations consultancy service.

Utility costs for small businesses

The Government has put in place measures to waive the payment of the first quarterly electricity (or the first three monthly electricity bills) issued on or after 1 April 2020 to the customer, in respect of energy use in the relevant billing period. Eligible businesses are being provided with the bill waiver through arrangements between the Government and electricity retailers. It is estimated that the waiver will apply to approximately 34,000 small business connection sites covering around 22,000 small business customers. The total estimated cost is expected to be between \$22 million and \$27 million. As at 30 June 2020 around \$18 million in bill waivers had been applied.

Arrangements have been made with TasWater to waive the payment of the first quarterly water and sewerage bills issued on or after 1 April 2020 of small business customers that are eligible for the electricity waiver. The eligibility criteria is the same as that for the small business electricity bill waiver. The estimated cost of the bill waiver and the price freeze for 2020-21 is expected to be \$25 million. As at 30 June 2020, around \$4 million in bill waivers had been applied.

Infrastructure investment

On 4 June 2020, the Government announced its infrastructure investment package to reboot the Tasmanian economy and support around 15,000 jobs. The package builds on the Government's current infrastructure package of \$1.8 billion over the next two years, and in total will support an estimated construction value of \$3.1 billion across the next two years. The package comprises the following initiatives:

Additional social housing dwellings

The Government is investing an additional \$100 million under new agreements with community housing providers to deliver up to an additional 1,000 new social houses.

The Government will also bring forward funding of \$14 million and provide new funding of \$10 million to deliver 220 new social houses by 2022 – a year earlier than planned.

Expanded HomeShare Program

To stimulate a greater take-up of the HomeShare program, the Government will revise the eligibility thresholds for HomeShare.

HomeShare reduces the initial cost of buying a house and the monthly cost of owning it. The scheme opens the door to home ownership for those who have enough income to make the step but need a helping hand.

Income eligibility limits will be increased by up to 15 per cent and the maximum financial asset limit will also be increased to \$100,000 to increase the number of households who can use HomeShare. The Government equity contribution has been increased to a maximum of \$100,000 per house. It is estimated uptake would result in 150 home purchases including 75 new builds over two years. The estimated cost of this initiative is \$9.3 million over two years.

HomeBuilder Grants

The Tasmanian HomeBuilder Grant provides eligible owner-occupiers with a grant of \$20,000 to build a new home. This grant complements the Australian Government's new \$25,000 HomeBuilder Grant, meaning Tasmanians can potentially access up to \$45,000 for their new home build.

These grants will assist the residential construction market by encouraging the commencement of new home builds and renovations this calendar year.

As at 28 July 2020, 50 applications had been received for the Tasmanian HomeBuilder Grant. For the Commonwealth HomeBuilder Grant program, 56 applications for new home builds and 8 applications for substantial renovations have been received.



The eligible period for both grants expires on 31 December 2020.

Essential services infrastructure

The Government is providing funding for the following essential services infrastructure projects:

- Regional Health and Ambulance Facilities Fund – \$10 million will be provided to upgrade the facilities in Tasmania’s regional health facilities and rural stations.
- Burnie Court – \$5.9 million of the \$15 million investment to improve access to court services in the North West will be brought forward.
- Child and Family Learning Centres (CFLCs) – an additional \$7 million will be provided for CFLCs, for a total investment of \$28 million. This will fast-track five of the promised six CFLCs, across all parts of the State.
- Launceston Police Station Refurbishment – funding of \$7 million will be provided to undertake urgent infrastructure upgrades and accommodation renovations to the Launceston Police Station. Improvements will include amenities upgrades, asbestos removal, security upgrades, structural repairs, and internal redevelopment.
- Emergency Services State Operations Centre – \$3.5 million will be provided to establish a new State Operations Centre in a central location from which all emergency services may coordinate the response to emergencies.
- Police Housing Upgrades – \$8.7 million will be provided to complete the upgrade of all police housing by June 2022. The Department has been progressing with the upgrade of police housing in line with the Government’s budget and Capital Investment Program (CIP) initiatives since 2014. The Department will complete the upgrade of the final 29 police houses over the next two years with this additional funding. These houses are located in various regional areas around the state and will provide a significant economic stimulus to a number of regional Tasmanian communities.
- Devonport High School – \$3.5 million of the funding allocated for the \$10.5 million redevelopment of the Devonport High School will be brought forward. This major redevelopment will include the provision of contemporary learning environments, support spaces and administration, and car park improvements.

Community infrastructure

The Government is providing funding for the following community infrastructure projects:

- Derwent Entertainment Centre – \$68.5 million for the upgrade of the Derwent Entertainment Centre as a world class entertainment and sporting facility including \$20 million for a community four court multisport facility.
- Cooee-Wynyard Coastal Pathway – an additional \$12 million will be provided over two years to the Burnie City and Waratah-Wynhard Councils to complete the coastal pathway between Cooee and Wynyard along the disused rail corridor. The funding will enable works to repair existing damage threatening the rail embankment and further works necessary to protect the corridor from future erosion risks over the next 20 years.
- Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens (RTBG) – an additional \$4 million will fund significant upgrades and modernisation of the RTBG to meet expectations of visitors. In the last four years the Gardens have experienced a 40 per cent increase in visitation to 525,000 visitors annually. This has placed pressure on existing infrastructure and demonstrated the need for these upgrades.
- Cascades Female Factory – \$3 million will contribute to the design and construction of a new visitor centre, which will include modern and accessible facilities. This project has already received Heritage Council and Hobart City Council approvals.



- Improving the Playing Field Fund – a \$10 million fund will be established to provide grants to sporting clubs and associations to improve playing facilities across Tasmania. The grants are designed to encourage continued participation in sports following the interruption of competitions due to the COVID-19 pandemic by improving the amenity of facilities for participants, officials and spectators. The grants program will also provide a valuable stimulus to the construction industry across urban and regional Tasmania.

Public building maintenance program

\$50 million has been allocated to fund critical maintenance on public buildings and other publicly owned assets, to support the construction sector with 'screw-driver and paint-brush ready' projects. The Government subsequently provided an additional \$20 million to the fund as part of the infrastructure investment package for economic recovery.

As at 31 July 2020, \$9.65 million has been spent in relation to the projects announced as part of this Program, including over \$4.9 million for work on Housing Tasmania properties around the State.

Projects are being delivered across a range of service delivery areas around the State, with large programs of work underway in schools, hospitals, health centres, ambulance stations, and public housing; as well as public amenities within Tasmania's national parks and reserves.

Local Government Loans Program

The Local Government Loans Program has been increased from \$150 million to \$200 million.

As at 9 July 2020, total approved borrowings of \$144.3 million have been provided to 21 Local Government Authorities under the Program. Applications received at that date include infrastructure projects such as upgrades to roads, bridges and jetties, stormwater improvements, and car park redevelopments. The cost of individual projects range from \$5,000 to \$6 million. Approval has also been provided to fund rates relief programs for the business and community sectors, and cash flow shortfalls and other operational initiatives.

The Program will close on 1 August 2020. Details of all approved projects are published on the Department of Treasury and Finance's website.

Roads infrastructure

The Government will allocate \$40 million for State road safety upgrades in 2020-21 and 2021-22.

The Government will also bring forward \$40 million in road safety projects through an accelerated procurement tender process. This will provide the local construction industry with certainty of work and employment prospects over the coming months and into the next construction season.

The first tranche of projects under this package are now out to market, including safety upgrades on Highland Lakes Road at the 'Pub with No Beer' corner, improved turning facilities on the Bass Highway at Boat Harbour, and road widening and improved turning facilities on the Arthur Highway at Eaglehawk Neck. A further nine projects will be put to market under this process and will include bridge strengthening works, the upgrade of Binalong Bay Road, the Bruny Island landside infrastructure, and road widening works on the Midland Highway between Powranna and Tunbridge.

Irrigation schemes

The Government is investing a further \$15 million to meet the increased demand for the first 5 schemes of the Pipeline to Prosperity irrigation scheme. The \$28.51 million, 5,000ML Don Irrigation Scheme in the North West is due to commence construction early in 2021, delivering 130 direct and indirect jobs once all the scheme water is fully utilised. Tasmania's nation-leading irrigation schemes are underpinning agricultural production and boosting farm productivity across the State, enabling farmers to diversify, value add and expand their existing farming operations.



Schemes in Fingal, Northern Midlands, Sassafras/Wesley Vale and Tamar districts are progressing and will provide farmers in each district with confidence to invest further in growing their businesses.

Trades and Water Centre for Excellence

The Government's vocational education and training system is critical to rebuilding Tasmania, providing the skills needed to support local jobs for industry productivity. To skill up local Tasmanians for local jobs in the construction and civil contracting industries, including the water and sewerage infrastructure sector, the Government has brought forward and re-capitalised the TasTAFE Trades and Water Centre of Excellence promised at the 2018 State election.

An initial \$7 million was provided for this initiative in the 2019-20 Budget. The Government will now provide a further \$7 million for the new \$14 million Trades and Water Centre of Excellence, which will be a key driver in delivering the skills needed to rebuild Tasmania. It will have its own industry-based Board, to ensure its operations and training align with the skill needs of employers.

Tasmanian Economic and Social Investment Fund

The Government will implement arrangements whereby up to 10 per cent of the Retirement Benefits Fund (RBF)'s investments will be invested in Tasmania to provide an economic and social return for the State.

The Fund will be used to identify suitable investments outside of Government in the private sector that can be supported across the economy to increase economic activity, create jobs and strengthen social outcomes. This could see up to \$200 million flow into investments in Tasmania.

Trade development

Interim Trade Action Plan

An Interim Trade Action Plan (ITAP) has been developed in response to the trade disruption caused by COVID-19 and identifies actions which address urgent and immediate needs for exporters over the next six months.

The Tasmanian Government announced on 14 July 2020 an additional \$2.65 million funding support for trade development that will help producers, exporters and manufacturers adjust to the new business climate over the next two years.

This funding commitment will help to deliver 41 initiatives under the ITAP. Each initiative is tailored to either assist businesses to maintain global trade or to ensure the Tasmanian brand does not dilute in global markets during the lengthy disruption period.

All the actions outlined below are new, however they support the key objectives of the existing Tasmanian Trade Strategy:

- An Asia Market Engagement Plan - \$500 000
- Establishment of Tasmanian Trade Advocates/Business Development Managers (2 years) - \$1 million
- Revitalised Accelerating Trade Grant Program - \$350 000
- Trade (Industry) Marketing Campaigns - \$500 000
- Dedicated Defence and Maritime Campaign and prospectus(s) - \$300 000

The Accelerating Trade Grant Program has been boosted to encourage Tasmanian businesses impacted by COVID-19 to continue their export market development plans.

The Grants can be used for new e-commerce opportunities, helping businesses build their online reputation, as well as support market research and business-matching services, promotional activities and materials, supply chain efficiency improvements and cluster development.



Training and skills

Rapid Response Skills Initiative

On 27 March 2020, the Government announced that an additional \$6.3 million was being made available through the Rapid Response Skills Initiative (RRSI) to support individuals who have lost their jobs as a result of COVID-19. Eligible individuals can apply for up to \$3,000 to get career advice, reskill or obtain licences they need to get their next job.

605 applications for subsidised training were received between 1 March 2020 and 3 August 2020, and 416 have been assessed and approved.

To help move workers into new jobs as quickly as possible, a Skills Matching Service has been established to help match job ready workers with industries and businesses who need staff now. A Grant Deed of \$200,000 for the period from April to November 2020 has been enacted with Searson Buck Group Ltd to provide this service.

As at 3 August 2020:

- 255 job seekers had registered with the service;
- 343 displaced workers had been connected with local employers, or assisted to apply for other advertised opportunities;
- 130 job seekers have been referred back to the Rapid Response Skills Initiative for re-training or personalised careers advice; and
- 23 displaced workers who have registered with the service have gained employment.

This funding will also support the \$1.5 million Train Now Fund that provides subsidised training to:

- ensure employers who have urgent training needs can access funding support;
- improve the likelihood of businesses remaining sustainable;
- increase the future productivity of the business to support economic recovery and growth; and
- increase the skill level and future employability of employees who remain with their employer, through completion of nationally recognised training.

Train Now Fund

Skills Tasmania released and allocated the \$1.5 million Train Now Fund to help employers up skill their existing workforce for a very different looking economy. The new program subsidises training places at 100 per cent of the Skills Tasmania subsidy rate and complements existing competitive funding streams such as the Adult Learning Fund and the Skills Fund.

Applications for the Train Now Fund opened on 29 April 2020 and closed on 16 June 2020 due to requests already in excess of the \$1.5 million budget allocation. This funding has supported 69 employers, mostly sole trainers and small businesses, to train over 1,400 individuals.

TasTAFE: 'SKILL UP for your future' program

The TasTAFE 'SKILL UP for your future' program was announced on 11 May 2020, to support redundant and unemployed Tasmanians re-enter the workforce and upskill, reskill or gain new skills, ready to enter into employment or change careers once the economy starts to recover from COVID-19.

The SkillUp program has been hugely successful, offering fee free online short courses and skill sets across a range of industries including Health, ICT, Community Services, Business, and Hospitality and Tourism – as well as a number of skills sets designed to get people job-ready.



Demand for the Basic Computing Essentials course was particularly strong, and to meet demand, TasTAFE has responded by making a second course available for a start date on 20 July 2020. TasTAFE has now also opened up applications for a second round of some SKILL-UP courses beginning in August 2020.

Skills Fund and Adult Learning Fund

On 30 July 2020, the Tasmanian Government announced \$3.6 million in funding support for learning programs to help Tasmanians to gain new skills and improve their employability.

The Skills Fund will see more than \$1.1 million provided to seven Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) for more than 1,500 training places across key sectors including construction, manufacturing and disability care.

In addition, the latest round of the Adult Learning Fund will provide almost \$2.5 million across 10 Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to support training for 550 Tasmanians in high-demand areas including aged services, disability and early childhood education and care.

Tourism and hospitality

The Government's first stimulus and support package included a combined \$100,000 to the Tourism Industry Council Tasmania (TICT) and the Tasmanian Hospitality Association (THA) for training in the tourism and hospitality sectors. A further \$200,000 was provided to the THA to provide business continuity and cashflow advice to businesses affected by COVID-19, increasing the THA funding for this initiative to \$250,000.

As at 9 June 2020, the THA had individually contacted a total of 2,226 hospitality businesses in Tasmania, both non-members and members, to advise them of the support that is available and navigating them through the process. The THA is now moving into a second phase of support, which includes an online coaching forum with a series of modules on how to ensure businesses are enabled to maximise profitability in this new environment.

The TICT has a target of assisting 200 tourism operators during the shut-down period.

Cultural and creative industries

Arts and Screen Digital Production Fund

To support screen practitioners, artists and arts organisations whose work has been cancelled, postponed or disrupted by COVID-19, grants of up to \$10,000 for individuals and \$50,000 for organisations is available through the Arts and Screen Digital Production Fund. This funding will help artists and arts organisations to work with Tasmanian screen professionals to make content in Tasmania for digital distribution and promotion.

Applications for the Arts and Screen Digital Production Fund closed on 4 May 2020. Seventy eight applications were received, with 29 being supported to the value of \$506,396. This will provide direct employment to 168 arts and screen professionals.

Additional Screen Development Fund

The Government also committed \$250,000 of additional screen development funding, which is being delivered through Screen Tasmania's Project Development Program. This program opened on 16 March 2020 and closed on 15 April 2020. A record 25 applications were received for this round, and a total of 13 applications were approved, with all projects being of an extremely high standard. The adaptation of an award-winning Tasmanian novel and the prequel of one of Australia's most successful television series are among the 13 successful projects to benefit from the Tasmanian Government's additional development round.

Tasmanian Contemporary Music Fund

To support Tasmanian contemporary musicians whose engagements have been cancelled due to COVID-19 to record music and music videos for digital distribution and promotion, grants of up to \$15,000 were made available. Projects must take place in Tasmania and support Tasmanian musicians to work with other Tasmanian artists and production professionals.



Applications closed on 4 May 2020 with 97 applications received. Twenty-two applications have been successful, to the value of \$255,041. This will provide direct employment to 150 music and music production professionals.

Additional funding to arts organisations

The Government has also committed \$500,000 to support arts organisations impacted by COVID-19.

Applications for this funding closed on 13 July 2020. A total of 27 applications were received and assessment of the applications is due to take place in August 2020.

Individuals and Groups Arts support program

The Tasmanian Government announced an additional funding boost to 60 Tasmanian artists through the latest Individuals and Groups Arts support program round. A total of more than \$349,000 has been awarded to these artists to help deliver 23 projects across of a variety of artistic platforms including music, theatre, visual art, writing and dancing.

Applications for this funding round were independently assessed by expert peers drawn from the Cultural and Creative Industries Register.

Healthcare sector

Primary Healthcare Grants

As at 31 July 2020, 496 GPs and pharmacies have received grants of up to \$10,000 to support the continuation of essential primary healthcare services during the COVID-19 emergency.

Telehealth capacity

To increase Telehealth capability, 20 virtual rooms have been expanded to accommodate up to 5,000 virtual appointment bookings. This expansion has resulted in improved provision of care statewide. These services enable patients to connect via Telehealth from their local health service, through to their clinicians who may be sitting in a clinic at the other end of the State. This has resulted in:

- 1,200 per cent increase in the delivery of appointments using telehealth from March to June 2020;
- 369,000 kilometres of patient travel saved;
- 4,488 hours of travel time saved for patients;
- 34 flights intra and interstate saved; and
- 67 metric tonnes of carbon emission saved from reduced travel.

Seafood industry

There are 680 wild fisheries licence holders that are eligible to receive fee relief from the \$4.3 million of stimulus support for the wild fisheries sectors. To date, 672 eligible fishing licence holders have applied for a refund of fees already paid and 671 have been refunded. There are 8 further eligible fishers who have not yet applied for the refund and the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment is in contact with these fishers. Fees covered by this initiative for fishers whose licence renewals have not fallen due will not be invoiced.

Licence fee relief for shellfish farming was fully implemented as at 30 April as this fee was not charged during the licence renewal process. 152 shellfish farmers applied for, and have received, the 12 month rental waiver.

Every shellfish marine farming licence holder, subject to the ShellMAP levy, has received advice that the levy for the coming year has been waived. This amounts to over \$7,000 in levy waivers per licence and collectively this relief amounts to \$770,000 across the shellfish marine farming industry.



The annual accreditation fee required under the *Primary Produce Safety (Seafood) Regulations 2014* will also be waived for the 2019-20 financial year. The estimated cost of waiving the fee is approximately \$39,000 and it will benefit seafood producers including approximately 66 bivalve mollusc producers and 65 abalone divers.

Critical air freight for industry and our islands

The Government has committed \$1 million to support international air freight movements and \$1.6 million to maintain essential airfreight services to the Bass Strait Islands.

The Tasmanian Government is providing direct support to:

- Sharp Airlines to maintain scheduled passenger services to King and Flinders Islands, including capacity for time sensitive freight.
- TasFast Freight to continue regular services between Tasmania and King Island and Victoria for the export of live seafood and the transport of time sensitive medical supplies into Tasmania.

Since 27 May 2020, the Tasmanian Government and Australian Government have jointly supported two additional freight flights per week between Hobart and Sydney to enable Tasmanian producers of fresh products, particularly high value seafood, to connect with flights to international markets. This arrangement was for an initial 12 week period and has recently been extended until the end of September 2020.

The Tasmanian Government is working the Australian Government regarding options for additional capacity over the summer peak season. The Department of State Growth is consulting extensively with industries participating in air exports, including seafood, fruit, meat and dairy to understand demand through that peak season.