



The Hon. Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister

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EO&E...

PRIME MINISTER: Thank you for gathering together here in the Blue Room this morning.

What does success look like in a COVID-19 world? It doesn't just look like having a low number of cases. That is welcome. But if we were to consider our success on COVID-19 as just having a low number of cases, that is not good enough. And that is not what our Government is seeking to achieve and I don't believe it is what the National Cabinet is seeking to achieve either. We have had great success in flattening our curve, that is obvious. But having a low number of cases, but having Australians out of work, having a low number of cases and children not receiving in-classroom education, having a low number of cases and businesses not being open, having a low number of cases and Australians not able to be going about their as normal lives as possible, that is not what success looks like.

This is the success we're seeking, to be able to have the protections in place, to enable Australians to go back to as normal a life and an economy as possible. And to be able to achieve that as soon as we possibly can and so it is important that we remain focused on the challenge ahead. We don't want to just win the battle against COVID-19 but lose a broader conflict when it comes to our economy and the functioning of our society. That is why we remain focused on the road ahead. The road back, the restoration of key elements of our economy and to ensure that the broader health needs of Australians are also being addressed.

Christine Morgan is joining me here today and will provide you with a presentation on issues relating to mental health as we go through the COVID-19 crisis. As you know, this was a matter that we raised very early in the piece and provided additional support, and I particularly commend also the State and Territory Governments for the way they have responded to the mental health challenges here. But it is important to understand that there are so many elements of Australians' health that we need to continue to attend to. Looking after our COVID-19 health is only one of many parts of our health. Our mental wellbeing, ensuring that our screenings continue to take place for the very many different diseases and other things that we need to continue to screen for, that individuals, Australians, families stay in contact with their GPs, to address their broader health issues. Elective surgery has recommenced for that very purpose as well, for the many important surgeries that need to take place for Australians who have been suffering. Because of the restrictions that had previously been in place.

So we are looking at what the bigger picture success is when it comes to COVID-19 and we are working to all of that together as a National Cabinet, our own Cabinet here at a Commonwealth level will be meeting again today as we do every week, to ensure we're focused on all elements of the recovery and the road back. And it is important to understand that on the road back, when we get to that COVID safe environment, where we can ease those restrictions, which is not too far away, and you're already seeing that happen with many of the States and Territories - as I said they would over this interim period before we get together in the week beginning the 11th of May and consider the baseline restrictions. States are already moving back from where they were ahead of those baselines and you have seen those announcements, whether it is in New South Wales or Western Australia or other places. That is welcome and I think that demonstrates to Australians that there is a dividend for them, for the way that they have been conducting themselves. Sure, there has been some rather high profile examples of those who haven't done that. I think Australians have expressed their views on that pretty candidly. But in the main, I think Australians have been doing the right thing and that is why they are seeing some easing of those restrictions.

But when we move back into this more COVID safe economy and society, it is important to know that with the easing of those restrictions, of course there will continue to be additional cases. Of course there will be outbreaks. That is what living with the virus will be like. That is why the protections that we put in place for a COVID safe Australia are so important.

Now, I can report that 2.8 million downloads and registrations that have taken place already for the app and I thank those Australians for doing just that. I would ask for millions and millions and millions more to do the same thing. This is an important protection for a COVID safe Australia. I would liken it to the fact that if you want to go outside when the sun is shining, you have got to put sunscreen on. This is the same thing. Australians want to return to community sport. If you want to return to a more liberated economy and society, it is important that we get increased numbers of downloads when it comes to the COVIDSafe app. This is the ticket to ensuring that we can have eased restrictions and Australians can go back to the lifestyle and the many things that they previously were able to do and this is important. So if you have downloaded the app, thank you very much. Convince two or three more people that haven't downloaded the app to do the same thing. We are unable to give you breakdowns of what ages of people have downloaded the app or what States they are from because all of that information is locked in the national data store. As you know, that is not information that is available to the Commonwealth Government or the state governments. That is the protection we have put in place. So we would encourage all Australians, if you want to see us return to the more eased restrictions that I know you're looking forward to and that I'm looking forward to, then it is important that you download the COVIDSafe app. That is your ticket, that is Australia's ticket to a COVIDSafe Australia where we can go about the things that we love doing once again.

I can also note that more than 800,000 JobSeeker claims have now been processed. That number will be well in advance of that by the end of today. It was just over 790,000 last night. And also earlier this week, the \$550 JobSeeker supplement is now being paid and that is rolling out over the course of this week.

I can also note that the Government has been working closely with the aged care sector and aged care consumer groups, including the Council On The Ageing, towards developing an industry code of conduct for supporting visitations to aged care facilities. You'll be aware of the strong views of the National Cabinet and I have expressed in ensuring that residents of aged care facilities are not shut away and that they do have access to their loved ones and their carers and others who provide support to them. There are, of

course, legitimate reasons why there would be restrictions at aged care facilities, particularly and obviously in places where there have been outbreaks. That is sensible. That is safe. That is to be expected but the norm should be, as the National Cabinet has set out in the health advice that they adopted some weeks ago now and it is the intention for that to be incorporated into an industry code of conduct and we're making good progress on that. And I would hope we would be in a position to have that finalised hopefully by the end of the week. But I thank the aged care sector for their cooperation and their engagement in pursuing that together with the Aged Care Minister, Richard Colbeck and I thank them and all the aged care workers all across the country for the work that they are doing, caring for our most vulnerable Australians and we need to ensure that we keep them safe but we keep them connected because that is good for their health as well.

Now just finally, before I hand over to Christine to talk more specifically about the mental health challenges we have and the progress we're making and the progress we need to make. I note there was a \$74 million package that was put in place at the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak and those, that package of support has been rolling out across the country and has been getting very good results. 50% of mental health consultations are now being done through telehealth as a result of the telehealth changes that we have made. One million telehealth mental health consultations have taken place since mid-March and some \$35 million specifically in mental health-related consultations have been conducted over that period of time, since telehealth was put in place. This is an important service that is available to Australians. It is clear, and I will ask Christine to go through this, but the isolation, the stay at home has been important but it does come with an increase in anxiety and an increase in pressure on individuals, their mental stress and that also takes a toll. That is why it is important that we get these COVIDSafe arrangements in place, so people won't be constrained, as they have been, they won't be under as much anxiety as they have been as a result of the isolation restrictions that have been necessary. It does impact on peoples' mental health and that is why the telehealth facilities are so important and for Australians who are feeling that way, for Australians who feel under stress, that is entirely normal and it is to be expected and there are a vast array of services that are available to you to support you at this time. Christine will go through those but they are well-known. There is Lifeline Australia, Kids Helpline, Beyond Blue, Suicide Call Back Service. Men's Line Australia, Headspace, all these services and many more are available online and available on phone but also particularly through your GP and the ability for you to engage in those consultations, psychologists, psychiatrists also can provide telehealth consultations. They are there to help you through this very stressful period and it only underscores again why it is so important that we get Australia back to a position where it can be COVIDSafe across the country, which means we can release the pressure, we can release some of the stress that is on families and individuals across the country from isolation and ensure they can get back to work, get back to school, get back to normal, get back to sport and if you want to see that happen, I want to see that happen, download the COVIDSafe app, please.

Thank you, Christine.

MS CHRISTINE MORGAN, NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION ADVISER: Thank you Prime Minister. As the Prime Minister has said, it was on the 29th of March that the Government announced a mental health support package, anticipating ahead I think of the curve of most countries the mental health impact that would be an inevitable consequence for many, many Australians. To recall that package, that package said, firstly, we must actually understand that the significance and the magnitude of the changes that we have been called upon to make as Australians, to respond and protect our safety, our physical safety and the safety of our country, will have an impact on us. We are being required to live differently, we are being required to live in different circumstances, quite constrained circumstances. So we established a specific

support line, hosted by Beyond Blue. And I will take you through in a moment what we are seeing some statistics with respect to Beyond Blue. You may also remember we said we have to take a preventive approach, we have to identify those particular groups in Australia who may be more vulnerable and we need to try and make sure that we are putting in place supports for them. In that space, we did some support services for our older Australians, for our younger Australians who are particularly challenged with the breaks in their education, our Indigenous Australians, our emergency front line workers and we have seen, as we anticipated, that there has been an increase in services. We also, at that time, most importantly, as the Prime Minister has said, we made a shift which really was a 10-year shift done in 10 days. And I can't overestimate that, of moving our mental health services onto a telehealth platform. In recognition that people could not get to them, so what has actually been happening? So I have chosen here just three snapshots of services that are being provided in the digital online space. But they are indicative of the broader range of services we have. Beyond Blue, Beyond Blue has seen a 40% increase in contact being made to it over this time last year and what we are seeing with respect to those calls is an increase in the distress levels and an increase in the anxiety levels and in the complexity of what people are feeling. We are also hearing - and this is anecdotal but I think we're hearing in something I will note later, that people aren't feeling as safe as they once did. So I think that is a concern. We look at our Head to Health. Now Head to Health was one of the initiatives that we boosted back at the end of March because we said it is incredibly important that we have a single source of truth, where people can go to know the facts around this, what they need to do for their mental health and where they can go. You can see the enormous spike in visits to Head to Health. And our young people, our young people with Reach Out and I am really pleased to see and to be able to affirm what Reach Out has done in this last week in launching a specific online support package, for parents and young people as they transition back into school. We know that for our young people they are incredibly concerned, not just about their education and the drop in education and the linkages there, not just about the fact they aren't necessarily seeing and getting the supports that they did in the school environment, but our young people are concerned about the future. They understand the economic impacts of what we must go through for this and they are understandably worried. So, from the mental health perspective, it is incredibly important that we are actually there to support them, and again we see that usage. But there are a couple of interesting things that are happening, and I want to just pause there and say what we are really looking at at the moment is this current phase. And the current phase, and you will hear me say this frequently, I do not use the word social distancing, I have an anathema to it, I use the word physical distancing with social connection, because it is about being physically distant, but how incredibly important it is to stay connected, and that has manifested itself in what we have heard over the last month. People are finding it challenging living in confined spaces. The most confined would be quarantine or required isolation, but for those of us staying at home, and that is the majority, the vast, vast majority of Australians, it is a pressure cooker. We are living with our loved ones. That doesn't mean it is easy. So they are the issues we need to deal with. Another issue that has really emerged has been a sense of loneliness for many Australians. For those Australians who live on their own, who actually cannot have that tangible reality of a hug from a loved one, we cannot underestimate the mental health impact that that is having on our Australians. And, of course, there is the worry, that is being addressed, but it is a worry, about job security, housing security, employment security. Those issues.

So what we would have hoped to have seen as a response to that is actually an increase in the use of mental health services. The reality is that, overall, there has actually been a decrease. Now, why is that happening? Why we think that is happening is that, for those who would normally be using mental health services to support their mental health and well-being, or their mental health challenges, are not actually going out and doing those visits. Now, we partially addressed that with the pivot to telehealth, and it is incredibly important that we look at the increased use of it, I can show you on this graph the increased

percentage use of psychologists using telehealth. It is now over the 50 per cent mark. It is working. But what we do, and I do this as a call out to all Australians, we did come into this scenario, we did come into COVID-19, with mental health challenges, many of us. We did come in with mental illness. You do still need to contact your mental health services. You can do it now on, through telehealth, you can do it through the digital services, but part of getting through this whole crisis is that we actually address our mental health and our well-being, so reach out we will continue to do that. I think that is probably the most that I would want to say on that. The other thing we are noticing, just to support that last comment, of a slight decrease, is generally our presentations to our emergency departments are down as well. So as I say, a call out to all Australians. Your mental health is really important, your mental well-being is important. As I said before, it is actually foundational. It is foundational to our creative resilience and being able to get through this in the best way we can.

But also just some circumstantial things that we are hearing, which I think it is just important to put to our notice. If I can just go - thank you. I mentioned that in particular in talking to my colleague Georgie Harman at Beyond Blue, that they are hearing stories of people not feeling safe. And I think this is a reality that all Australians need to address. I have said before that it is incredibly difficult to go behind closed doors to see what is happening in confined spaces, but we can look at the increase in calls to 1800 RESPECT, we can look at the increased calls, not there, but which we have also recorded, to Men's Help Line. We know that this is happening, we know that people may be more challenged than normal to reach out for help, so I call on all Australians, keep your eyes alert for what may be needed.

So what are we doing? In conversations this morning with the Prime Minister and with our Federal Health Minister, and reflecting on a very, very strong meeting that we had with Australian Ministers responsible for mental health just at the end of last week, we are looking at significantly ramping up our ability to coordinate service delivery, to ensure that the accessibility that we have opened up with telehealth, the accessibility that we have opened up with increased digital and online services, is able to be accessed by Australians in a way that passes across our jurisdictional and Commonwealth systems. We need to make that work better. We need to ensure that anybody who actually needs a service is reached. We are looking at how can we reach those Australians who are not currently coming to us for help? We know when we look at those we lose to suicide that 50 per cent of those we lose have not come in touch with our mental health services. We are looking to what we can do by way of outreach. So the Commonwealth is working in conjunction with the states and the territories on a plan, on a mental health response plan, which will look at what are we doing in the current scenario? What are the current specific issues, challenges and services we need when we are in this state of physical distancing, and staying at home? Then we will look at what is the appropriate response as we ease those restrictions, and we must ease those restrictions. Now, as the Prime Minister has said, that is absolutely critical to us getting back to the life we all want to have. Will we be anxious during that time? Yes, that's inevitable. We can't stop the anxiety, but we can certainly support and address it. So the second phase that at will be looking at the reality of that, and how can we from a mental health perspective ensure that we are there to meet the needs of Australians? We will look at what are the particular issues? Should there be surges or hotspots, and we will look at what is needed for the longer term recovery. And that is a plan which I understand from the Prime Minister he has invited to be put before National Cabinet. And we are doing this in a very short turnaround time. We will have something to present for consideration by the end of next week.

PRIME MINISTER: Thank you, Christine. As head of the Mental Health Commission, on the day National Cabinet was actually formed, there were three presentations that were actually made to the group that day, the Governor of the Reserve Bank, the Head of Treasury, and Christine Morgan was also there on that day out in Parramatta, and so it'll be important that Christine will be making a presentation to the

National Cabinet this Friday, and then following that up with the plan that is already under way, working with the states and territories. The cooperation on mental health between the states and territories and the Commonwealth has been outstanding.

Happy to take questions. Why don't we start with you, Greg at the back, and then work our way around the room, if you'd like?

JOURNALIST: Thank you, Prime Minister. Just on this, data I guess is key to everything at the moment. You're talking, Christine, about trying to identify hotspots for surges. I'm just wondering if there are correlations between JobKeeper and JobSeeker, that is unemployment circumstances, whether that data might be helpful in you identifying pressure points geographically or in the community?

MS MORGAN: Thank you. If I could just perhaps clarify, when I talk about hotspots, that is not necessarily hotspots for mental health issues, it is hotspots for presentation of the illness, and what that may mean particularly if you need to go into more restrictive, lockdown type scenarios. That said, I don't think it is an easy thing to do any correlation between particular stresses, and we do certainly acknowledge the significance of the economic and employment stresses, and help seeking for mental health particularly at a time when we're opening it up to telehealth and when we are opening it up digital and online. We can certainly look at engagement rates, we can certainly look at those who are reaching out, and we can try and pick up some trend data. As I said to the Prime Minister this morning, one of the challenges, of course, with mental health data is that it is not as quantitative or as finite as what has been able to be used in terms of tracking physical reactions to COVID-19, so we are very much looking at trend lines. We are looking at keeping all of our senses open, to understand the reality of what's happening.

PRIME MINISTER: Moving across the back.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, you have today again indicated that you would like to see the states begin to lift restrictions back potentially to the baseline that was agreed by National Cabinet. All the states have begun to do that on some level, other than Victoria, who is standing strong on keeping all restrictions in place until 11 May at the very earliest. Have you had a discussion with Premier Daniel Andrews about this at all, and what's come of that? And if I may also on the schools issue, if independent schools in Victoria take up this funding proposal put forward by the government last night, that potentially would see those students come back about six weeks earlier than the public school students. What would be the issues you would see then, what would you like to see done in Victorian schools?

PRIME MINISTER: First of all, Dan and I, the Premier and I, talk quite regularly, as you would expect I do with all the Premiers. We are working together. That doesn't mean we don't from time to time have a different view about particular issues. It would be extraordinary if we didn't. But the fact is, when we do work through these issues, we do it in a very cooperative and respectful way. And that is very much the relationship I have with not only with Dan, but with all the Premiers and Chief Ministers, as we work through these issues. So yes, we talk all the time about this, and the point about the states that have gone beyond the baseline levels of restrictions is, that is entirely a matter for those states, and for them to make that judgement, based on how they see the conditions in their own state. Now, the case numbers in Victoria and New South Wales, for that matter, and you could also argue Queensland, to a slightly lesser extent, is very different to the circumstances in Western Australia, South Australia, the Northern Territory in particular. And so it is not surprising that you would see those states with incredibly low case numbers and track records on those issues to be moving ahead of the states on the east coast. I'd been flagging that for months, that I would expect that to be the case. And indeed, the experience of those other states,

in Western Australia and South Australia, I think will provide a good guide to those states, like New South Wales and Victoria, which have had a much higher incidence of the virus in their communities. So I think their experience actually helps each other. And we are all swapping notes, and our officials are all swapping notes, on how this is working, and I expect that to continue in the weeks ahead, before that key date, which the National Cabinet has flagged.

Now, in relation to schools, this is a position we have adopted nationally. It is something I flagged with the Premiers back in mid-April. It is true that the states run the state school systems, and they will make calls in their states, and the Commonwealth is the predominant funder of Independent and Catholic schools, and we will make decisions based on the evidence, that evidence both on a health basis and as well as from educationalists as you've seen, is classroom teaching is where we need to get to, and that is what we will be supporting Independent and Catholic schools to do. That is a national policy, and it is one that we are pursuing nationally, and it is one that we have already had very positive response to, and will continue to go down that path for those schools. And in terms of any different practices at state schools, by states, I am sure that will be not proved to be too much of a hurdle for people to get over.

JOURNALIST: In regards to the road ahead, some researchers from the Group of Eight universities have argued that pursuing elimination through continued strict lockdowns could lead to greater community confidence which would flow on to greater participation in the economy and deliver ultimately a far higher, in their words, economic outcome, a quicker economic recovery. Has that factored into your thinking from an economic point of view and from a mental health point of view?

PRIME MINISTER: To be fair, they have put two views and which sort of argued both sides of the argument, so that is not surprising in what we are dealing with, there are a lot of uncertainties in this area. But the government, our government has pursued that suppression approach. We haven't gone to the eradication approach. The eradication approach, which, whether you would characterise the New Zealand approach as that or not, I know there is some debate about that, but they obviously went into much more extreme economic measures, and basically getting the same health results as Australia, and some would argue Australia has had stronger results. The idea is pretty simple, and that is to get the virus under control, and I think by any measure, Australia compared to other nations has done extraordinarily well on that front. But then you have to put in place, as we are doing right now, the protections for a COVID safe Australia, and those protections are the key to that economic unlocking in the future. Because otherwise you simply, as I think the New South Wales Premier was suggesting this morning, and as I have warned against as well, you get into this stop-go approach going forward, and you don't want that. What you want is a confident moving forward, and continuing to make gains, and continuing to ease restrictions, and continuing to be in a position where your economic activity is lifted. Now, that doesn't mean there won't be setbacks and it doesn't mean there won't be outbreaks, and it doesn't mean there won't be extra cases. I suspect there will. The question is more about what you can do about those outbreaks. Now, if you go back over a month ago, there was no concept of, I'll use Christine's term, physical distancing with social connection. There was no concept of that in the community. There was no app to protect. There was not widespread testing. There had not been the ramp up in our ICU capability, at that time. All of those things were not in place six weeks ago. They are now, more or less. There is still more work to do on the app. Download the app, COVIDSafe, please, please, and get about that task because that will enable us to go further down that path. So that is how we are pursuing it. Putting the protections in place for a COVID safe Australia, which means we can get an economic growth occurring again, and for Australians to move back to all the things Australians like doing again. It won't be exactly like it was before. I can't see international travel occurring anytime soon. I can't see that. The risks there are obvious. The only exception to that, as I have flagged, is potentially with New Zealand, and we have had some good

discussions about that. But outside of that, that is unlikely. But I look forward to the time when Australians can travel again within Australia. I look forward to the time where they can sit down to a meal at a restaurant or a cafe or in a pub again. I look forward to the time where they can see, whether it is the AFL, the netball, or the NRL, or whatever code it is they support, and being able to watch that again. But I can't see them going along to a game for a while, those larger mass gatherings. I can see, I suppose, the opportunity for those seeking private prayer in a place of worship, I can see that happening. I can't necessarily, though, see large services occurring again. But anyway, these are the issues we have to work through.

Brett?

JOURNALIST: Just on the virus more broadly, is Australia still going to push for an independent inquiry into the origins of COVID-19 in Geneva at the world health assembly? And just on the reaction from China, it is getting very messy. Some comments today in Chinese media about this being an all-out Crusade, accusing you and your government of panda-bashing. Is this a fight you need right now?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, Australia will continue to of course pursue what is a very reasonable and sensible course of action. This is a virus that has taken more than 200,000 lives across the world. It has shut down the global economy. The implications and impacts of this are extraordinary. Now, it would seem entirely reasonable and sensible that the world would want to have an independent assessment of how this all occurred, so we can learn the lessons and prevent it from happening again. I don't think this is a remarkable suggestion. I think it is a fairly obvious and common sense suggestion, that I believe there will be support for at the right time, to ensure we do that. We are a supporter and a funder of the World Health Organization. We have supported particularly the work they do on the ground here, in our region, in Southeast Asia, and in the Southwest Pacific. But it is an organisation like any that can learn lessons from how this began, and the authorities had to understand what was happening, and the transparency around those issues. Nothing extraordinary about that. So what Australia is pursuing is not targeted. It is said independently, it is said out of common sense, and I think in Australia's national interests, and in the global interest. And so I find Australia's position to be not remarkable at all, but one that is entirely responsible, and I am sure is broadly seen in that light around the world.

JOURNALIST: In terms of China's response though, they don't see these as ordinary comments. They are angry about these comments.

PRIME MINISTER: That is a matter for them. Australia will do what is in our interest, in the global interest, and we will of course continue to support moves to ensure there is a proper independent assessment of what has occurred here. I mean, that is in the global health interest, it is in the global economic interest. It is not a remarkable position. It is a fairly common sense position, and one that we don't resile from.
Greg.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, you have outlined your concern about your opposition about the reopening of wet markets in parts of China. What about - there are many, as we have seen today - wet markets in Indonesia, as well? Are you similarly concerned about health issues that could arise from those wet markets, and will you be asking the World Health Organization to look into that? And just secondly, you have just looked into the camera and asked Australians to download the app, please, please. Have you had that same conversation with Barnaby Joyce?

PRIME MINISTER: I haven't had the chance to talk with Barnaby, to be honest. I've been a little busy, but he has been part of backbench committee meetings and backbench and party room gatherings that we have had, and there has been the opportunity to raise those issues in the normal forum, and I have spoken to all of those forums as well. But it highlights the point, you know, this is not a mandatory exercise. We are seeking the goodwill and support and participation of Australians to deal with a national health crisis and the appeal is simply made on that basis. And as I said, downloading the app is like putting on sunscreen to go out into the sun. It gives us protection as a nation. It protects you, it protects your family, it protects your loved ones, it protects our health workers, and it protects your job, and the jobs of many others, because it enables us to move forward and to get the economy back on the track we want it to be on. The protections are in place in terms of people's privacy and other legal detections. The biosecurity act provisions are already in place, and we will have belts and braces when it comes to the legislation that comes before Parliament. On wildlife wet markets, my position has never been directed only to one country. It has been a broad position. These markets exist in many places, just as the next pandemic could come from any country, any country in the world. It could occur in any part of the globe, and it is important that we learn the lessons of how this pandemic started, so we can move on any future pandemic, wherever it starts. This is why it is an important initiative, and one that I believe has support to occur at the right time. In Europe at the moment, I was speaking to the President of the European Commission last night. We discussed this issue. The Europeans are bringing forward a motion on this matter at the World Health Assembly. I think it is a very good motion.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, Newmarch House, can I ask for your response to the events of the last 36 hours there. And beyond the visitor code of conduct that you have already spoken about, does it suggest to you that we are failing in our management of aged care in this pandemic in this country, and how might your government address those failings?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, Tim, first of all, my first thoughts are with the families of the 12 residents who have passed away. Australians who have passed away during the COVID crisis, while those numbers are nowhere near as high as we have seen in many other countries, they are still very real here in Australia, and particularly for the families of those who have lost loved ones. And it is one of the sad truths of the COVID-19 virus that it particularly is fatal towards those who are vulnerable because of whether they are aged, or comorbidities, or other health challenges that they may have. And that's why aged care facilities have been a key area of focus for us. And we have had a number of outbreaks in a number of facilities, that is true. But by and large, across the country, when you think of the number of people who are in aged care facilities, and the number of facilities that are affected, the performance to date, at a national level, right across all states and territories, well, I think the numbers speak for themselves. It doesn't lessen the impact of those who we have lost in the facilities that are there, not for one second, and I understand the frustration of families, particularly when it relates to communications around these issues, and in relation to communication, a webinar was held last week with the families. The service NSW Health and the federal Aged Care Quality Commission, at our request to the older person's advocacy network, held a meeting with families last night towards improving the communication between residents and their families and, of course, the government has also asked OPAN, which is that Older Persons Advocacy Network, to put a worker on-site to assist families with up to the minute information on their loved ones. So communication is key but I suspect and know that one of the frustrations for families is being able to have access to the facility, and there is limited access to that facility at Newmarch. But that is an obvious case of where there has been an outbreak, that obviously there are going to have to be restrictions on people's access in that situation, and where there are outbreaks in other facilities, as we have seen in parts of Tasmania or New South Wales or other places, being able to move as quickly as you can to separate those who have the virus and in almost all cases, to the best of my knowledge, the virus has come in through a workforce, not

through visitors, and that is unfortunate. But that is why our testing regime is moving to address particularly those in a lot of these vulnerable work areas, both for their protection but particularly for the protection of residents. So the aged care task here, I think, is very difficult and very challenging. But, to date, despite some outbreaks in particular facilities, the mainstream of aged care experience he has been much better than those. And there is a combination of responsibilities across the Commonwealth, funds these facilities, we run the quality oversight in relation to these facilities, and those things. The state health department has the public health response in that facility, and they do their job, we do our job. The aged care sector itself does its job. So everyone has responsibilities here, and we are all exercising them and working together.

JOURNALIST: As we look to coming out of this crisis, a lot of the debate is turning to our high level of dependency on China. Do you think that, in future, we should become less dependent, for example, in the university sector on Chinese students, and in terms of manufacturing, should we be more self-sufficient in certain products, rather than having to have this dependence on imports from China in certain sectors?

PRIME MINISTER: I think Australia should always act in its national interest. I think Australia should always seek to be having an economy that is as self-sufficient as possible, and to be that, it has to be competitive. There are things that have restrained the competitiveness of our manufacturing and other sectors in Australia, that if we want to have these sovereign capabilities, it isn't achieved through nationalisation or large public subsidies and protectionism. It's achieved by having competitive businesses that can operate in these sectors and be successful. That is what the road back looks like. It doesn't look like, you know, an industry run from Canberra. It looks like an industry made up of very successful, innovative businesses on the ground, finding markets, sustaining themselves, employing many Australians, engaging new technology, and using the best minds that we have. That is where sovereignty comes from, and that is the type of approach that we will be pursuing. Australians will find markets, as we have been now for a long time, all around the world, and for many years now our markets have been diversifying. I mean, the predominance of our trading relationship with China is obviously resources based, and I see no reason why that would alter in the future. I mean, the thing about our relationship with China is it is a mutually beneficial one. It is a comprehensive strategic partnership, and we will continue to pursue that partnership, respecting China's sovereignty, and their independence, and its success will continue to depend on that being returned.

JOURNALIST: And the universities?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, again, the universities find themselves in a challenging situation at the moment, and they have received a lot of support from the government in this present crisis. But they will look to their future. They will make decisions about their commercial arrangements, and the markets that they will seek to focus on. It is not for the government to make those decisions for them. They will make those decisions themselves, and they will make them in the best interests in the future viability of their own operations.

JOURNALIST: Jacinda Ardern got a phone call from the Queen last night. Have you spoken to Her Majesty? And on China again, the state-backed media got a lot of rhetoric about Australia being a bully in the region and bits and pieces. Are you concerned...

PRIME MINISTER: Sorry, can you just repeat the second part?

JOURNALIST: State-backed media having comments about Australia being a bully.

PRIME MINISTER: State-backed media?

JOURNALIST: Like, Chinese state-backed media being a bully in the region and so on. Is there concern that the wheels have really fallen off this relationship, that beyond COVID it is going to have remaining tensions in the Australia-China relationship?

PRIME MINISTER: No, no I don't think so. Look, Australia, we hold a consistent position and we have on a range of issues. There is not going to be agreement on all of those issues all the time and I think the key to Australia's relationship is just being consistent. And we are consistent on all of the measures on where there has been some potential tension and frustration, as there has been on these. We will just be consistent. We don't lightly form the views that we do on these things, and we hold the position that we have. We seek to explain it as best we can, as respectfully as we can, and understand that the comprehensive strategic partnership is built on that mutual benefit and I think that mutual benefit continues to be there now and into the future. But both countries will manage that relationship from the perspective of its own national interest. That is not extraordinary. That is what you would expect. And I can assure you, we will manage every relationship that we have in our national interest. We will put Australia first in all of these arrangements, wherever it may be. And no, I haven't heard from the Queen. I have heard from Prince Charles, though, and I am happy to take the call. Jenny and I had the great privilege of meeting Her Majesty last year, and I'm pleased that she is in great health, and I hope she recently enjoyed her birthday, and we celebrated that ourselves.

JOURNALIST: PM, the NRL aims to be back on May 28. Will that happen?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, that still hasn't been determined. The Commonwealth has made no decision about the access by the Warriors into Australia. That hasn't happened. I think it is helpful for all of these issues that have to be resolved to hopefully achieve that timetable that they be done between agencies and the NRL and indeed with the AFL and the other sporting codes who are working to these ends and we will continue to work with them in good faith. And I think the best way for those things to be resolved and progressed is in that normal way. But there is still a bit of work to do. But as I said at the outset, I like the aspiration. Great to see it back on there. But it's got to satisfy all the health requirements. And there is the code that is being developed for elite sport, professional sport, community sport, as well as in individual recreation that's being done by the medical expert panel now, I received an update on that this morning from Professor Murphy, and we hope to make more progress on that for that to be able to be available for a first look by the National Cabinet later this week. But I stress again, if we want to get back to sport, then we need to download the app. It's not a mandatory requirement, but it's common sense, and Australians want to see that happen. Then when we sit down as a National Cabinet and make these decisions about easing restrictions, it's one of the many things we're going to be looking at. I'd love to see community sport get back, the evidence we're seeing about transmission in outdoor areas is encouraging. The medical evidence on that is encouraging. But for it to, us to have confidence of a COVID safe Australia, then we need the COVIDSafe app to be in place. Kieran.

JOURNALIST: PM, a 4 year old with COVID and went to day care for two days, a day care centre near Penrith in Sydney. Obviously, health officials have been looking at that very closely to see whether any kids or teachers contracted the virus. It's a reminder, I'm asking you, how do you react to that? I guess it's a reminder that young kids are still vulnerable to it, although less vulnerable than other elements of the population. And Ms. Morgan, I want to ask you have you got any advice to people who might be having

experience with mental health issues for the first time, maybe not wanting to get assistance, but things like, you know, exercise. Simple tips, you can give people?

MS MORGAN: Yes absolutely.

PRIME MINISTER: Oh look, on the first one, and Professor Murphy, I think, is better placed to comment on the epidemiology of these. It has always been the case that there are cases amongst those who are very, who are younger but proportional to the rest of the population are very small incidents and also the incidence of those who are of younger age contracting the coronavirus as compared to a normal respiratory ailment of flu or something like that is much, much, much lower. So undoubtedly there will be individual cases. That's I don't think of itself a surprise, but it really goes to any sort of more widespread incidents. But I have no doubt that those individual cases are looked at by Professor Murphy and the rest of the medical expert panel.

MS MORGAN: Thank you. And thank you for your question. So what if I understand correctly, it's for those of us Australians who are feeling a stress on our mental health and our mental well-being. We may not feel at this point in time we need the formal counselling support, but what can we do? And that's a great question, because I think that just like with our physical health, there are very practical things we can do to look after our physical health. Likewise with our mental health, I mean, and it is being challenged. So you heard me say at the beginning, physical distancing with social connectedness. I think that social connectedness is probably the most fundamental thing. And social connectedness is not communicating. It's not just doing the texting and the typing. It is actually engaging on as human an interaction level as you can with other people within the confines of your own home or wherever you may be. So it's using Facetime, it's Skyping, it's, hearing a laugh is better than being told about a laugh. So it's actually that human connection and I can't emphasize that enough whether we're dealing with people who are in crisis for suicide ideation or feeling anxious and alone. All of us need that social connection. Secondly, I think many of us are feeling as though we have lost a bit of our own autonomy, our own ability to control our environment. And that kind of feels a bit deflating, it takes away from us and also makes us anxious because we don't know how long this is going for. So I sort of go, regain control. You can set a routine within your own home. You can choose to do this in your own unique way. You can actually have more freedom to do that than perhaps we can when we're going to work and doing other things. So I think that psychologically, that's really important. It's also really good for our health that we have a routine doing things like the right amount of exercise, sleeping, not too much alcohol, those kind of things I think are really important and reaching out to others. We heard from and I said this before, we heard from our fellow Aussies during the bushfires that when the chips were down, we really needed to rely on each other. We needed to build community. So how we can proactively build community, we are in a digital world. We do have people in our society who don't know how to do that online stuff. How can we reach out and help them? Random acts of kindness, I think are great. And I think the good old Aussie spirit. I don't know if you've seen it, but the bin night, dress up for bin night. Those kind of things where we're reclaiming some of that creativity, some of that energy, some of that hope that as we come out of this, we can actually come out of it differently. But okay.

PRIME MINISTER: Watching those Andrew-Katharine mash-ups too on TikTok can help.

JOURNALIST: Sorry two completely unrelated questions. The first one, do you realistically, in terms of getting the Budget back on track on the road out, do you realistically expect to be able to take the JobSeeker payment back to its original level? You've just said in your opening remarks 800,000 people signed up or would you be prepared to taper it or revert it to a higher than original level? And just the

second question, we're anticipating as early as tomorrow, the resignation of Mike Kelly. What relevance would you ascribe in terms of a test or whatever the outcome of the subsequent byelection in current circumstances?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, let me deal with the first question, JobSeeker supplement, COVID supplement, which has begun this week, and the JobKeeper arrangements were temporary measures that were put in place for the COVID period, which was set to the end of September. Our objective is to get those on JobSeeker and JobKeeper back into their jobs. That's what our objective is. That's what we're focussed on. That's what our road ahead is about, is to get those Australians off those income supports and back into employment and to do that, it means as I started this press conference by saying success looks like that. It looks like people getting back into their jobs, businesses reopening, Australians being able to move back into a COVID safe world where protections are in place and it maximises the amount of activity that they can undertake. Now, when you're in that situation, then obviously the income supports that have been put in place to get people through that period well won't be necessary on the other side, we made that clear at the outset. This was emergency response measures. This was not a change in the government's view about the broader role of the social safety net in Australia. I think we have a very strong social safety net. But in this particular point of time, and as the Treasury Secretary pointed out yesterday, when you're looking at unemployment going above 10 per cent, as I've said to you on a number of occasions, I fear worse statistics coming forward on the economy in the months ahead. And we need to prepare ourselves for that. That's why JobSeeker and JobKeeper were put in place to deal with the heavy blow that the COVID-19 pandemic is going to have on the Australian economy. But that's why we also need to move as quickly as we can, getting these protections in place to ensure that our economy can grow. Now, the Budget will be restored by our economy growing. And that's why as we move towards the Budget scheduled for October this year, then we'll be in a position to outline a range of measures that will support that growth into the future, which will support the budget. That's important because the Budget supports essential services. It's all about jobs. It's all about services going forward and ensuring that we can do that in a responsible and sustainable way with the Budget. And these emergency measures come at a great cost. And clearly that level of cost is not a sustainable level beyond what we've flagged.

In relation to Dr. Kelly. I wish him well if he indeed intends to make that announcement soon. He's served his country in uniform. He's served his country in the Parliament. And if that indeed is the decision he makes, I wish him all the best and I thank him for his service in both of those respects. The Liberal Party will certainly contest the seat, as I'm sure the National Party will certainly contest the seat. But that doesn't change the history, which would mean that it would be a one in 100 year event for a government in those circumstances if they were to take a seat from the opposition, that would be a rather extraordinary outcome. But it's one we will put our best foot forward for, in this environment. But my expectations. Well, I think you can say are conditioned by history. And I think that would be the reasonable assessment. But that said, I mean, the government has a plan we're showing I think the leadership through this crisis that Australians are seeking from the Government and importantly, we are focussed on what success looks like for our country. And it's not just beating the virus. It's about ensuring that we can get Australia back to where we were and to make us even stronger beyond that. And that's what our government will always stand for and the policies that support that.

Now, just as we leave, I just want to give a reminder on those, Lifeline, number, Lifeline Australia, 13 11 14; kids help line is 1800 55 18 00; Beyond Blue is 1300 224 636. The Suicide Call Back Service is 1300 659 467. Men's Line Australia, doing a great job, 1300 78 99 78. So that's 1300 78 99 78. And Headspace, you can access them at www.headspace.org.au. And as always call your GP. Telehealth is available to you through your GP. And don't forget the COVID help line 1800 020 080. And don't forget, download the app.

Download the app, put your sunscreen on equivalent. Download that app. And the sooner we can get Australia back to where we want it to be, we will achieve that together. Thank you all very much.

[END]

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