

Media Release

The Hon Jill Hennessy MP

Attorney-General

Minister for the Coordination of Justice and Community Safety – COVID-19

Minister for Workplace Safety



Tuesday, 15 September 2020

STRENGTHENING OUR HEALTH RESPONSE AND KEEPING PEOPLE SAFE

The Victorian Government will implement vital new measures to keep driving down cases and keep them low, as well as extend existing changes to support Victorians and continue delivering the services they rely on.

The *COVID-19 Omnibus (Emergency Measures) and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2020* will be introduced into Victorian Parliament on Thursday and will extend a range of temporary changes made by the previous Omnibus Bill, introduced in April, for another six months.

This includes the ability to make procedural changes by regulation, judge-only trials in certain circumstances and the ability to extend interim Family Violence Intervention Orders and Personal Safety Intervention Orders to ensure the person in need of the order remains protected.

Courts will continue to be able to access electronic filing and execution of affidavits, and use of audio-video links, telephone and other technology to conduct proceedings.

In addition, the Bill also extends a range of practical changes made that allow for vital services and forums to continue operating, like virtual local council and PAEC committee meetings, allowing planning permits and panel hearings to be carried out electronically and for teacher and training organisation renewals to be done online.

To ensure we continue to support long term injured workers who will face increased challenges finding employment due to the impacts of their injury and coronavirus, the Bill will provide a further extension to the notice period for long term injured workers who are due to transition off WorkCover weekly payments, giving those with payments due to end between October and December 31 up to six extra months of additional support.

The extension of the moratorium on evictions and other measures to protect and support tenants are part of separate legislation introduced last sitting week.

The Bill being introduced also includes new temporary emergency measures to strengthen the state's health response to coronavirus and ensure we can stay on top of the virus as we take steps towards a COVID normal.

These measures will be in place for six months – until 26 April 2021 – and include broadening the types of people who can be appointed as Authorised Officers to enforce public health interventions, and clarifying powers to ensure people who test positive for coronavirus or are close contacts comply with a direction to self-isolate.

The Bill also assists WorkSafe inspectors in enforcing compliance with occupational health and safety laws, to ensure employers are meeting their obligations to protect their employees from coronavirus. Magistrates and Children's court registrars will be able to change the date, time or place of certain proceedings, to allow more flexible scheduling of matters and take pressure off the courts.

The Bill will also extend the period-of-time for which a family reunification order may be made, to ensure children at risk continue to get the protection they need.

Quote attributable to Attorney-General Jill Hennessy

"These are temporary, necessary changes allow us to continue responding to the challenges the pandemic presents, so we can keep protecting Victorians and delivering the services they rely on."

Quote attributable to Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos

"These measures will enable us to enforce the rules that are keeping us safe, and will be vital in keeping cases low as we take the next steps towards COVID-normal."

For information about coronavirus visit coronavirus.vic.gov.au or call 1800 675 398.