

Tuesday 25 August 2020

VICTORIAN AMBULANCE UNION SUPPORTS EXTENDING STATE OF EMERGENCY PROVISIONS

The Victorian Government have announced proposed changes to the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* (Vic) that will be introduced into the Victorian Parliament.

The purpose of these proposed changes is to ensure that the public health directions protecting Victorians from COVID-19 can continue to be enforced beyond 6 months.

Currently the health protections that we need to protect Victorians against COVID-19 are only available if Government declares a State of Emergency. These health protections include requiring the wearing of face masks, requiring people to self-isolate and the creation of Workplace COVID-19 plans. These measures are essential in protecting against COVID-19 transmission. Under current legislation these protections can only remain in place for a total of six months.

Victoria is the only state in Australia that has a timeframe on the duration of a State of Emergency. Legislation changes will be introduced into the Victorian Parliament to ensure the public health directions protecting Victorians from coronavirus can continue to be enforced beyond a 6-month timeframe.

The VAU supports this proposed logical step and will be contacting Victorian Members of Parliament and calling on them to support hardworking Paramedics and ambulance workers who are on the frontline of this pandemic.

The stress and pressure that our members are experiencing during COVID-19 cannot be overstated. They face daily risk of exposure and are likely to be heading into a hot summer where everyday they will be wearing full PPE if the virus is not contained.

Having strong protections in place is an absolute must and we fully support any legislative change that delivers those protections.

Quotes attributable to Danny Hill – Secretary of Victorian Ambulance Union (VAU)

“An honour system will not work. We need strong protections that can be enforced to protect healthcare workers. Otherwise our members will be fighting a losing battle against COVID-19”.

“Under the current Public Health and Wellbeing Act, the State of Emergency provisions are capped at 6 months. COVID-19 is not capped at 6 months and neither are the SOE provisions in any other state in Australia”

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