

8 April 2020

Joint Statement from members of the Victorian Parliament Legislative Council Crossbench

As we respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, we understand the Victorian Government has been faced with difficult decisions on a daily basis.

In an effort to protect the community, the Government has chosen to exercise extraordinary powers, and make significant expenditure.

It is a time that also requires robust democracy.

We, the undersigned crossbench members of the Legislative Council believe that parliamentary oversight of the Executive is vital, especially at times like these.

We welcome the opportunity to work with the Government to ensure further sittings of Parliament run smoothly, while also ensuring MPs can do their jobs, representing their constituents and providing appropriate oversight.

Ideally, Parliament would continue to sit regularly in a safe manner, passing necessary legislation and providing necessary scrutiny on the Government's actions. We are supportive of Parliament meeting online and encourage the Presiding Officers to move quickly to enable Parliament to meet safely while the pandemic remains a threat.

If the Parliament is unable to regularly sit in a safe manner, we propose that there should be a multi-party joint parliamentary committee with the explicit purpose of inquiring into the Government's management of the COVID19 pandemic.

Other jurisdictions have implemented similar oversight mechanisms, including New Zealand and New South Wales.

We take seriously our roles as representatives of the people of Victoria in the Parliament. A key role of parliamentarians in a representative democracy is to provide oversight of Executive actions.

We are open to negotiation as to the structure and operation of any joint committee.

The Government should welcome scrutiny. It is an essential element of any liberal democracy.

Signed,



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