

JOINT RELEASE  
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## **CROSBENCHERS WANT COVID-19 RESPONSE SCRUTINY IN VICTORIA**

In a significant show of unity, members of the crossbench in Victoria have today signed a joint statement calling on the Government to ensure Parliament can continue to provide some form of oversight during the COVID-19 crisis.

With the Government exercising extraordinary powers and making significant expenditure on a near-daily basis, it is important that there continues to be some form of parliamentary oversight.

The joint statement calls for Parliament to continue sitting, so that important legislation can be passed during this time.

Failing this, the crossbenchers are calling for the establishment of a scrutiny committee, to ensure continued oversight of the Andrews Government's response to the crisis.

### **Quotes attributable to Leader of the Victorian Greens, Samantha Ratnam MLC:**

"At a time when the government is literally making life or death decisions, it is important that democracy doesn't become one of the casualties.

"We want to see parliament continue to sit virtually during the pandemic to ensure any significant legislative changes can be made with broad input.

"But if this is unable to be established then we need a committee that will afford proper scrutiny to the government's response to the crisis.

"We thank the government for their response to the crisis so far, but they should not be able to exercise these extraordinary powers without oversight."

### **Quotes attributable to Leader of the Reason Party, Fiona Patten MLC:**

"These are extraordinary times that require extraordinary measures to keep the public safe, we all understand that, but we should all be concerned about the infringement on our civil liberties.

"That is why we need independent oversight to properly review government decisions during this time. The Federal Parliament is appointing a multi-party committee to review federal government decisions, and we should be doing the same in Victoria, especially given we have such a large amount of independent and cross party members representing literally millions of constituents.

"The government shouldn't be afraid of oversight – they should welcome it as part of our democratic process. I am pleased to join with other crossbenchers today to make this statement."

### **Quotes attributable to Liberal Democrats MLC, David Limbrick:**

"Nobody intends to get in the way of common-sense measures to stop the pandemic, but there has never been a more important time for the government to be transparent and accountable.

"Listening to Victorians is every bit as important as flattening the curve. If the Victorian Government wants to use the police to lock up our children and stop people from sitting on a park bench, they owe it to Victorians to offer a very good explanation in parliament."

**Quotes attributable to Liberal Democrats MLC, Tim Quilty:**

“The government has practically unlimited powers to fight COVID-19, and I for one am not happy with the way they are using those powers. Without the parliament to question them we risk seeing ever more abuses against people engaged in ordinary activities alone who pose no risk of spreading the virus.

“Without the Legislative Council to hold the government accountable we might as well be living in a dictatorship. Perhaps we already are.”

**Quotes attributable to Sustainable Australia MLC, Clifford Hayes:**

“I think it’s essential that parliament continues to sit at regular intervals to oversee government actions and to pass legislation.

“If we can’t achieve this we should have an oversight committee established representing all parties.”

**Quotes attributable to Justice Party MLC, Tania Maxwell:**

“Given these are such unprecedented times, we require parliament to continue to operate so we can represent our constituents whilst performing our duty as scrutineers of the government.”

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