

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Industry calls on Andrews Government to keep greenfield construction exempt from future lockdowns**

The recent five-day snap lockdown, which presented uncertainty for construction projects in Victoria, unnecessarily cost workers and business tens of millions of dollars and held up vital community projects.

John Kilgour, CEO of the Civil Contractors Federation (CCF Vic) and Angela Gaedke Acting CEO of Urban Development Institute of Australia, Victorian Division (UDIA Victoria) say the introduction of restrictions to the greenfield civil construction workplaces, where you often have one worker to 2,000 square metres, had little, or no risk associated with the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

'We understand the need for lockdowns, even in parts of the building and construction industry, but it should not apply to civil construction in the greenfield areas, which is done in the open air, has some of the greatest social distancing in the state, and was exempt under previous Stage 4 restrictions' said Mr Kilgour.

The recent five-day lockdown is estimated to have cost the building and construction industry workers \$63m in wages and industry \$455m in lost revenue for each day of the 'circuit breaker' lockdown period.

In addition to the financial cost, projects like the Big Housing Build Program's fast-start sites and the race to meet HomeBuilder deadlines, were brought to a standstill.

'Any further shutdown will seriously risk the ability of Victorian purchasers to qualify for the HomeBuilder grant, which expires March 31. Missing the deadline would severely impact industry and homebuyer confidence, as well as cost the Victorian economy,' said Ms Gaedke.

Road construction and subdivisional works were impacted by the uncertainty surrounding the snap shutdown.

'These projects are important for workers, businesses, and ultimately the communities who are waiting on vital infrastructure and services to deliver housing and amenity for their families. Government must consider whether compromising or shutting down an industry that is outdoor based, and inherently COVID Safe, is a measure commensurate to transmission risk,' said Ms Gaedke.

July data provided to UDIA Victoria and CCF by the Department of Health and Human Services, shows that construction workers are five times less likely to contract COVID than the total Victorian population, with construction workers accounting for only 0.02% of all COVID cases.

'Having proved ourselves willing and able to stay operational through much more significant COVID crisis points, the total closure of Victoria's development, building and construction sector, with all new rules, was very confusing,' said Ms Gaedke.

'We're calling on the Victorian Government to proactively work with us on a logical and clear set of restrictions that can be reverted to by default as and when needed, consistent with what was implemented during the Stage 3 shutdowns to allay confusion and provide the industry with much needed clarity and certainty' she said.

'The construction industry is the engine of the economy, and at such a precarious economic time, we need to make sure it keeps going if it's safe to do so,' said Mr Kilgour.

'We're asking the Andrews Government to apply a common sense approach consistent with measures previously implemented under Stage 3 and Stage 4 lockdowns where construction workers who operate in an open air environment in sectors such as civil and residential construction, roads, utilities, airport rail, bridges, and low-rise houses can continue to operate at safe distances with COVID Safe plans in place,' said Mr Kilgour.

## **Ends**

### **Available for comment:**

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