

Media Release

The Hon Jaala Pulford MLC

Minister for Employment

Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy

Minister for Small Business

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TAKING IT OUTDOORS: SUPPORTING A SAFER WAY TO OPEN

The Victorian Government will help businesses and the community breathe new life into local neighborhoods as vaccination progressively delivers greater freedoms across the state from Friday.

With summer drawing near and Victorians warming to the promise of a return to bars, cafes and restaurants, new support unveiled today will build on the success of last year's *Outdoor Eating and Entertainment Package* which helped to create an agile world of parklets and pop-up bars, with streamlined council permits.

The \$54.5 million *Outdoor Economy Package* will help support the costs for thousands of businesses of setting up for street trading, and back councils to provide the necessary infrastructure and support.

A \$14.5 million *COVIDSafe Outdoor Activation Voucher Program* will provide more than 7,000 Victorian businesses, community organisations, not-for-profits and trader associations with \$2,000 grants when they spend at least that amount to support initiatives such as outdoor hospitality and entertainment.

The vouchers will be valid for expenses including purchasing and hiring marquees, screens and umbrellas, obtaining insurance and promoting outdoor operations. Some 20 per cent of the vouchers will be allocated in regional Victoria.

Hairdressers, beauty services, retail shops, dance studios and gyms will also be eligible to apply for vouchers, meaning they can join restaurants, cafes and bars in harnessing the opportunities of kerbside trading. The Voucher Program will open soon and will be delivered by Business Victoria in partnership with Service Victoria.

A new \$40 million *COVIDSafe Outdoor Activation Fund* will help councils transform more outdoor areas so Victorians can enjoy local attractions safely as we reach the key 70 per cent double vaccination threshold, then 80 per cent, with restrictions lifting significantly at those marks.

The Fund will allocate \$20.5 million so councils can provide immediate assistance to businesses to operate outdoors, through physical improvements such as new street furniture, landscaping, marquees, planter boxes and public art, as well as entertainment to bring our outdoor precincts to life.

Funding will be allocated based on the level of business activity, with metropolitan councils to receive between \$300,000 and \$800,000, regional councils \$300,000–\$500,000 and rural councils \$100,000–\$250,000.

Councils will also receive a share of \$19.5 million to establish semi-permanent and permanent outdoor precincts.

The Fund will provide maximum benefit to businesses with councils encouraged to use part of their allocation to waive permit fees and related charges. Councils will be required to agree not to create or impose any new or net additional fees or charges to businesses to use new or upgraded outdoor spaces.

The City of Melbourne will continue to be supported separately through the \$100 million *Melbourne City Recovery Fund* and the \$200 million *Melbourne City Revitalisation Fund* – the Government is working with the City of Melbourne to devise a program of direct support for businesses to establish and enhance outdoor operations.

Quote attributable to Minister for Small Business Jaala Pulford

"This is about giving businesses support to reopen in safe and new ways, ensuring they can recover strongly and quickly. Our small businesses are raring to go and this will mean more customers and more trade as we move ever closer to our key vaccination targets."

Quote attributable to Minister for Local Government Shaun Leane

"Councils will work with their communities to breathe new life into streets and shopping strips across the state, making the most of outdoor opportunities this summer and beyond."

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