

# Using the Social Progress Index to Identify COVID-19 Vulnerabilities

## A CSI Amplify Response

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***This fact sheet shows that the bulk of Federal, State and Territory policy responses to COVID19 have focused on economic protection – specifically on protecting or supporting businesses. Understandably, there has also been a large investment in basic healthcare that has been able to support rapid COVID19 testing as well as necessary hospitalisations. However, there were also policies introduced that may ultimately end up harming Australia’s social progress.***

## Key Points:

- Australian States and Territories have different pain points for vulnerability and must be considered when planning recovery from a disruptor such as COVID19.
- COVID19 will likely exacerbate social vulnerabilities, as it entrenches inequalities and affects certain sociodemographic groups more than others.
- Policy responses across the country have primarily focused on economic recovery and maintaining employment; some States and Territories have also prioritised ensuring there is adequate policy to protect personal safety, access to basic education, and inclusiveness.
- The Social Progress Index offers a useful tool to identify State and Territory social vulnerabilities, as well as understanding Government priorities based on where money is spent. To ensure that jurisdictions can build back better from COVID19, Governments, industry and community services should work together to identify community priorities in addressing disadvantage and creating more inclusive societies.

COVID19 has impacted every Australian. It has highlighted the vulnerabilities many Australians were already facing with housing, employment, or access to services. It has also showed us that the economy is fragile, and a focus only on protecting the economy puts lives at risk. It does not automatically mean that people will have a place to sleep or be able to receive adequate healthcare.

Australia has achieved astounding success in flattening the curve of COVID19 infections. As restrictions begin to lift for travelling and gathering in groups, how Australia responds to COVID19 as a society is an opportunity to create a more inclusive and equitable society. However, this requires a political shift in priority that is not focused entirely on the economy, but also creating a society that is socially progressive.

In this paper, we demonstrate that the bulk of Federal, State and Territory policy responses to COVID19 have focused on economic protection – specifically on protecting or supporting businesses. Understandably, there has also been a large investment in basic healthcare that has been able to support rapid COVID19 testing as well as necessary hospitalisations.

There was also policy recognition of the impact of COVID19 on those who were experiencing homelessness or required domestic and family violence support. Some States and Territories committed to stimulus packages that would allow community organisations and not-for-profits to increase their volume of social services.

However there were also policies introduced that may ultimately end up harming Australia’s social progress. A number of States announced or fast-tracked new mining projects as a way of protecting the economy, but will ultimately impact Australia’s environment. Similarly, the introduction of on-the-spot fines for people breaking public health orders has potential to be enforced in ways that target particular groups, such as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people or migrant communities.

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***Where money is spent tells us about a government’s priorities. To recover from COVID19, States and Territories should be focused on building back socially inclusive societies***

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## The Social Progress Index

The Social Progress Index (SPI) is a tool that models how Australian States and Territories are performing on fundamental social and environmental outcomes, *relative to one another*. By looking at non-economic indicators, we can get a better sense of how a society is faring independent of economic measures. The first Australian SPI was released in February 2020, and uses the most up-to-date available data for social and environmental indicators across Australia.

### Social Progress can be defined as:

*“the capacity of a society to **meet the basic human needs** of its citizens, establish the building blocks that allow citizens and communities to **enhance and sustain the quality of their lives**, and create the conditions for all individuals to reach their full potential.”*

The SPI is based on three overarching domains that are considered to be fundamental factors that enable social progress. Within each of these domains are four components which give us the best way of understanding how social progress can be measured and accessed in society. Each of these components have a ‘universal guiding question’ that help conceptualise what we are trying to measure (see Figure 1).

By exploring how each State and Territory is performing relative to other jurisdictions in Australia, we can gain an understanding of where a State or Territory may have vulnerabilities to improving overall social progress (see Figure 2). **In order for overall social progress to improve, all scores across the SPI framework need to improve.**

A time series of SPI results from 2015-2018 are available for exploration [online](#). Individual States or Territory scores on components of the SPI are also shown, which highlights where States and Territories could individually target and tailor their policies in order to strengthen areas of vulnerability.



Figure 1: The Social Progress Index Framework & Universal Guiding Questions

We have used the 2018 results of the Australian SPI (see Figure 2) to identify areas of vulnerability within each State and Territory, and considered these areas of risk alongside State or Territory policies and government

spending. Ideally, policy responses should align with areas of vulnerability to bolster areas of social progress that already require additional policy support.

Individual State and Territory responses to COVID 19 were sourced from the respective jurisdiction government websites. Articles and media statements regarding funding or significant changes to laws were matched to relevant components of the SPI framework. The SPI is focused on social and environmental indicators of progress, rather than economic indicators. However, economic-focused policy responses were also collected in order to understand the focus on economic as opposed to social recovery during and after COVID19.

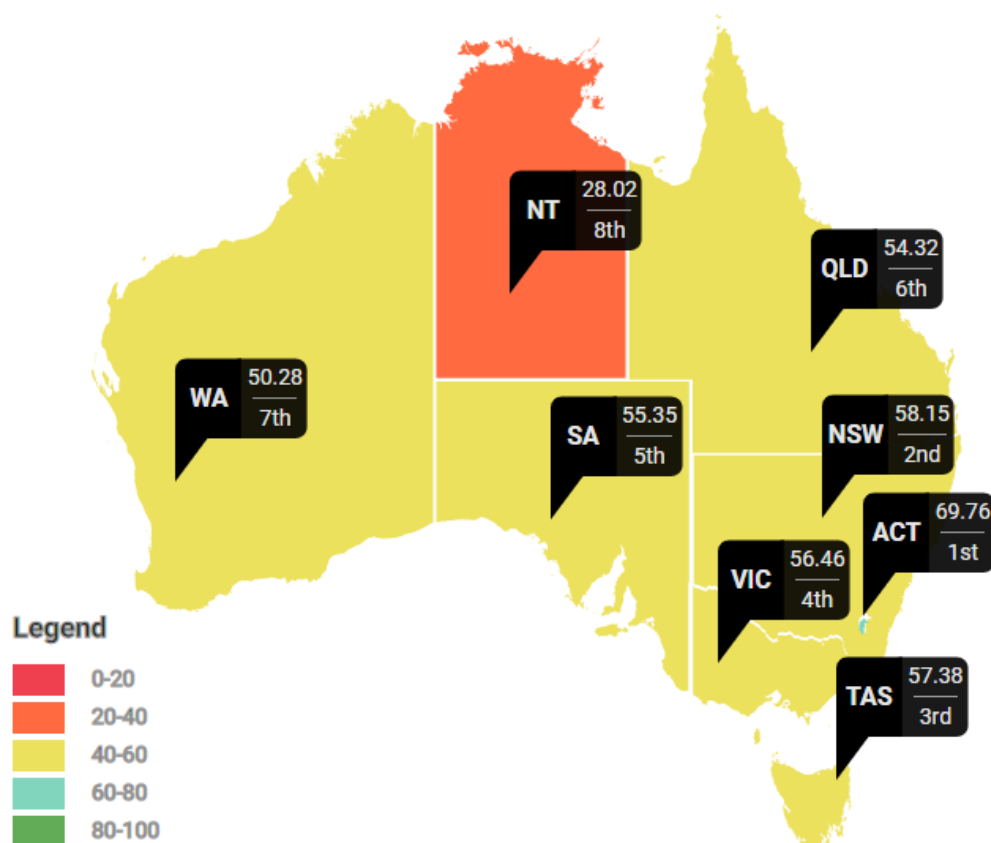


Figure 2: 2018 Australian Social Progress Index Scores and Rankings

## Federal responses and policy trends

The Federal Government passed a number of strong economic-focused policy responses to COVID19, including an initial [\\$17.6billion](#) economic stimulus package released in March, primarily focused on business support but also providing a once-off \$750 stimulus payment for those receiving government assistance and certain concession card holders. Approximately [\\$146billion](#) has been committed to the Jobkeeper program, which is dependent on an expected negative economic impact of COVID19 on the business applying for the payment. The Government also announced it would support up to [\\$40billion](#) in lending to small and medium enterprises who have been impacted by COVID19. Programs such as HomeBuilder, JobMaker and JobTrainer are also explicitly focused on supporting the economy through employment (particularly trades). A total estimate of \$270billion has been committed to economic and employment-focused policy responses to COVID19.

As would be expected, much of the policy response across Australia focuses on funding healthcare infrastructure and operations, rightly prioritising **Nutrition and Basic Medical Care** needs. There has also been a focus on **Shelter** – primarily through offering rent relief to either landlords or tenants, and offering rebates on utilities and rate payments. State and Territories have tended to respond individually to the needs of people experiencing

homelessness. Many measures are positioned as temporary, which poses a risk for the security of people experiencing housing stress or homelessness after the economic threat of COVID19 is judged to be over.

Many States and Territories have employed measures to monitor behaviour that ensures everyone follows social distancing and are not engaging in activities such as large gatherings. Some jurisdictions (such as Victoria and New South Wales) have given police officers authority to give on-the-spot fines for people who are not following social distancing. While necessary to ensure that community safety is prioritised, these measures present a risk for **Personal Rights** and **Personal Freedom and Choice**. Policing and fines are not enforced equally across racial and socioeconomic groups, and there is a high risk of people from poorer or non-white backgrounds being disproportionately targeted by these measures. There needs to be appropriate critical oversight of these fines and how they are given at a system level, rather than relying on self-monitoring among officers and avoiding collecting data on racial and socioeconomic backgrounds of people who receive fines. A disproportionate rate of fines given to people from Indigenous or migrant backgrounds poses a risk to improving social progress.

This document contains a detailed analysis of individual State or Territory policies and how they align with the Social Progress Index framework. A separate document maps jurisdiction policy responses to COVID19 against each of the components of the SPI framework, as well as noting responses that are targeted primarily at economic outcomes, such as supporting business or preventing unemployment.

### Australian Capital Territory

GSP per capita 2018	2018 SPI Score	COVID19 infections per 100,000 <sup>1</sup>
\$89, 810	69.76	26

The ACT was the top performing jurisdiction in overall SPI scores, as well as the domain scores for each year that the Index was calculated. While the ACT performed strongly across many of the indicators used to calculate the Index, some of its lower performing components included

- Personal freedom and choice;
- Inclusiveness; and
- Environmental quality

Some of the government responses to COVID19 help respond to these areas of vulnerability, particularly in improving **inclusiveness**:

- A support package for temporary visa holders and international students ineligible for Commonwealth assistance;
- A \$7 million Community Support Package to meet an increased demand for emergency relief;
- \$2million in support for the not-for-profit sector to deliver mental health and community support

The ACT government has also focused its response to COVID19 on the following areas:

- **Nutrition and Basic Medical Care** (an expected \$126million on infrastructure, equipment, and operating capacity)
- **Shelter** (including utilities concession rebates; land tax and rebates for landlords that reduce rent for tenants impacted by COVID19; and a one-off payment of \$250 for all social housing households)
- **Access to Basic Knowledge, Access to Information and Communication** (providing Chromebooks and free wifi for disadvantaged homes to support remote learning)
- **Health and Wellness** (an additional \$100,000 to Lifeline Canberra to support phone counselling)
- **Access to Higher Education** (increasing subsidies for apprenticeships and traineeships to access accredited training for skill needs priorities).

The ACT Government also announced at least \$26million in economic and employment-targeted policies in response to COVID19.

Compared to its economic peers (based on GSP per Capita – WA, NT, NSW and QLD) ACT is performing better than expected on all domains of social progress, and 9 of the 12 components<sup>2</sup>. When considering recovery and longer-term plans for ACT's social progress, the indicators included in the SPI suggest ACT and its policies are in the position to continue maintain positive levels of social progress.

<sup>1</sup> Rates per 100,000 were calculated to allow for comparison across jurisdictions. Number of confirmed cases were divided by most recent population statistics for each jurisdiction.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix for scorecard

## New South Wales

GSP per capita 2018	2018 SPI Score	COVID19 infections per 100,000
\$71,367	58.15	44

New South Wales was consistently ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> for overall social progress between 2015 and 2018. While it performed strongly on many basic human needs and foundations of wellbeing, its lower scoring components included

- Inclusiveness;
- Access to Information and Communication;
- Environmental Quality;
- Personal Freedom and Choice; and
- Shelter

Some of the NSW government responses to COVID19 help respond to these areas of vulnerability, including:

### Shelter

- \$60.5million delivering maintenance works and upgrades on [public housing properties](#);
- \$34million boost in funding to prevent homelessness and \$30million to boost the Energy Accounts Payments Assistance scheme;
- \$440million land tax break to support landlords and tenants impacted by COVID19 financial stress

### Inclusiveness

- \$51million to provide [fee-free childcare](#) in community or mobile preschools for up to 6 months;
- \$600,000 in grants for combatting [social isolation](#) for seniors during COVID19

The NSW government has also committed funding to other endeavours that could also positively impact social progress:

- **Nutrition and basic medical care** ([\\$700million](#) to expand hospital ICU capacity, increasing COVID19 testing, and purchase additional ventilators and medical equipment);
- **Water and sanitation** ([\\$250million](#) cleaning stimulus to improve cleaning of public facilities)
- **Health and wellness** ([\\$73million](#) to boost mental health services)

However, NSW has also introduced a number of policy initiatives in response to COVID19 that could negatively impact social progress:

- **Environmental quality**

The NSW government announced [\\$2.2million](#) in drilling grants for new mineral deposits in regional NSW, and a deferral of payment for Exploration Licences and Assessment Lease Applications. The mining sector is expected to protect NSW financially, however this is at the risk of protecting natural resources and the environment.

- **Personal freedom and choice**

[Breaching Public Health Orders](#) on COVID19 Restrictions on Gathering and Movement can lead to a maximum penalty of \$11,000 or imprisonment for 6 months. NSW Police also have the authority to issue on-the-spot fines of \$1,000 for offences. In addition, anyone coughing or spitting on essential workers can be issued with a \$5,000 on-the-spot fine. Policing and fines disproportionately target minority groups, and it is possible that these fines will be unequally concentrated amongst Indigenous people, migrants, and lower socioeconomic groups. Such a disparity reflects an unequal standards of personal rights and personal freedom and choice in the community.



# Australian Social Progress Index Identifying COVID-19 Vulnerabilities



The NSW Government also committed at least \$3.6billion to tax cuts or policy spending that was focused on economic stimulus and employment protections.

Compared to its economic peers (QLD, VIC, SA, TAS), NSW is performing better than expected on Water and Sanitation. It is performing marginally better than expected on overall social progress, Basic Human Needs, Opportunity, and Nutrition and Basic Medical Care.

NSW is well placed to offer basic medical care and sanitation (particularly in urban NSW). Many policy responses are currently focused on maintaining and protecting the economy. Policies should be critically analysed to ensure they are not undermining or sacrificing social progress purely for the sake of the economy.





### Northern Territory

GSP per capita 2018	2018 SPI Score	COVID19 infections per 100,000
\$101, 258	28.02	13

The Northern Territory ranked last across all years that the Australian SPI was calculated. The NT faces particular challenges particular because the [40% of the population](#) live in remote or very remote locations. Additionally, 80% of the NT's Indigenous population live in remote and very remote locations. This has implications for access to services, and the implementation of policy that works in dense city and urban environments will not necessarily work in rural and remote locations.

Some of the lowest scoring components for the NT included

- Access to Basic Knowledge
- Water and Sanitation
- Shelter
- Health and Wellness

A strong focus in the NT response to COVID19 is preventing the spread of the illness to remote communities. These communities are predominantly made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, where this is also less access to essential health services. Travel to remote communities and other designated bio-security areas have been [closed to non-essential travel](#).

Most of the NT policies in response to COVID19 are focused on [boosting](#) or supporting the NT's economy, [small businesses](#) and [workforce](#), committing at least \$242million in stimulus spending, recovery packages and tax breaks.

Announced policy spending aligned with three components of the SPI:

- **Personal safety** ([\\$3million](#) boosted funding for domestic and family violence services)
- **Access to basic education** ([\\$10.8million](#) classroom stimulus program to build 15 pre-fabricated classrooms)
- **Inclusiveness** ([\\$5million](#) Worker and Wellbeing fund for people who are experiencing unemployment, reduced income, or are otherwise affected in their workplace because of COVID19. This support is [also available](#) to VISA holders and international students living in the Territory; [Innovation and adaptation](#) of youth services, including food programs that support at-risk young people and vulnerable families; and [\\$10,000 one-off grants](#) to childcare operators to offset costs of supplies, cleaning and maintenance, as well as reduced enrolments.)

Compared to its economic peers (WA, ACT, NSW, QLD), NT is generally performing worse than expected on overall social progress and its domains. It is performing within the expected margins for Environmental Quality, and is performing better than expected in Inclusiveness.

Notably, there was no additional Territory government spending dedicated to Nutrition and Basic Medical Care or Shelter despite these vulnerabilities in the NT, particularly in remote Aboriginal communities that were particular vulnerable should COVID19 break out. As basic human needs are an area of underperformance for the NT, compared to its economic peers, the lack of specific policy response to nutrition and basic medical care, water and sanitation, and shelter expose significant vulnerabilities for the NT in the coming months.

### Queensland

GSP per capita 2018	2018 SPI Score	COVID19 infections per 100,000
\$66, 169	54.32	21

Queensland ranked 6<sup>th</sup> out of 8 in the 2018 Social Progress Index. Between 2015 and 2018 its rank ranged between 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, with mid-range performance on basic human needs and select aspects of wellbeing. In 2018, its lowest scoring components included

- Access to Advanced Education
- Inclusiveness
- Access to Information and Communications

Some of the QLD government responses to COVID19 help respond to these areas of vulnerability, including:

- **Access to Advanced Education** ([free online TAFE](#) courses made available for jobseekers)
- **Inclusiveness** ([\\$10.5million](#) to assist the arts sector, focusing on small and medium arts organisations)
- **Access to Basic Knowledge and Access to Information and Communications** (supply of laptops, simcards, internet dongles and hot spots, and repurposes laptops, iPads and internet devices to [support school students and their families](#))

The QLD government has also committed funding to other endeavours that could also positively impact social progress:

- **Nutrition and Basic Medical Care** ([\\$1.2 billion](#) to expand fever clinics, emergency department capacity, acute care services and regional aeromedical services for remote communities.)
- **Shelter** ([\\$24.7million](#) housing and homelessness plan; [\\$300million](#) cost-of-living relief for households, including credit to offset utility costs)
- **Personal Safety** ([\\$5.5 million](#) to manage increase in demand for domestic and family violence services)
- **Health and Wellness** ([\\$3.5 million](#) to Lifeline to fund additional counselling services)

However, QLD has also introduced a number of policy initiatives in response to COVID19 that could negatively impact social progress:

- **Environmental quality**  
The QLD government supported a [\\$10billion](#) commitment from Arrow Energy's Surat Gas Project. The commitment is seen as a milestone for ensuring Queensland's economic recovery from COVID19.
- **Personal freedom and choice**  
[Failure to comply with public health direction](#) or contravene a requirement can result in an on-the-spot fine of \$1,334.50 for individuals. Policing and fines disproportionately target minority groups, and it is possible that these fines will be unequally concentrated amongst Indigenous people, migrants, and lower socioeconomic groups. Such a disparity reflects an unequal standards of personal rights and personal freedom and choice in the community.

The QLD Government also announced at least \$1.4billion in economic focused policies, including tax exemptions, interest-free loans for business, industry recovery packages, and funding for additional essential employment.

Compared to its economic peers (VIC, NSW, SA, TAS), QLD is marginally underperforming on overall social progress. It is performing worse than expected on Basic Human Needs and Opportunity, but performing better than expected on Environmental Quality.

Queensland has identified health and shelter as its social priority areas through its policy spending choices. However, policies that are at risk of disproportionately impacting minority groups and risking reduced environmental quality for economic gain may further jeopardise Queensland's overall social progress.

## South Australia

GSP per capita 2018	2018 SPI Score	COVID19 infections per 100,000
\$59,839	55.35	25

South Australia ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in the 2018 Social Progress Index, rising from 6<sup>th</sup> place in 2015-2017. In 2018, SA's lowest scoring components included

- Access to Information and Communication
- Environmental Quality
- Access to Advanced Education
- Personal Freedom and Choice

South Australian Government responses have announced measures that may help address the following vulnerability:

- **Access to Advanced Education** ([\\$13.8 million](#) support package for SA international education sector, including financial support for international students; [\\$16 million](#) VET Market Continuity Package;)

Additional measures have focused on other components of social progress:

- **Nutrition and Basic Medical Care** ([\\$15million](#) investment in upgrading country hospitals, as well as boosting nurse and midwives in the health workforce;
- **Water and Sanitation** ([\\$720,000](#) towards one-off payment for every child in family-based care to help buy essential cleaning and hygiene products)
- **Personal Rights** (Increased [legal aid](#) assistance in response to COVID19)
- **Inclusiveness** ([\\$1.6 million](#) funding boost to relief organisations, NGOs and charities supporting vulnerable South Australians; [\\$3.35 million](#) towards community support grants)

The South Australian Government also announced at least \$1.7 billion in tax relief, job packages and economic support in its response to the impact of COVID19.

Compared to its economic peers (TAS, VIC, QLD, NSW), SA is largely performing within expected ranges for overall social progress, Basic Human Needs and Opportunity. It is performing better than expected on Shelter and Inclusiveness, but performing worse than expected on Foundations of Wellbeing, Nutrition and Basic Medical Care, Water and Sanitation, Access to Basic Knowledge, and Access to Information and Communication.

South Australia is implementing social policies that could help to address its underperformance in Nutrition and Basic Medical Care, while also supporting its previous performance in Inclusiveness and Access to Higher Education. The policies announced primary are focused on Basic Human Needs and Opportunity; the lack of attention to components of social progress that make up the Foundations of Wellbeing is a risk when considering SA's future social progress.

## Tasmania

GSP per capita 2018	2018 SPI Score	COVID19 infections per 100,000
\$52,213	57.38	42

Tasmania ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in overall social progress in 2018, rising from 5<sup>th</sup> in 2016 and 2017. In 2018, Tasmania's lowest scoring components were

- Access to Advanced Education
- Access to Information and Communication
- Inclusiveness

The Tasmania Government have announced responses that may help address the following vulnerabilities:

- **Access to Advanced Education** ([\\$6.3 million](#) Rapid Response Skills initiative funding upskilling study through TAFE to enable re-entry into employment)
- **Inclusiveness** ([\\$5 million](#) funding for community organisations support vulnerable people through the provision of food hampers, medical supplies or counselling; [\\$500,000](#) to eligible RSLs and ex-serving organisations to support veteran communities; [up to \\$3 million](#) in support for temporary visa holders)

Additional responses have announced additional measures that speak to other components of social progress:

- **Nutrition and Basic Medical Care** ([\\$3 million](#) additional funding to the Primary Health Care Fund; [\\$150 million](#) to purchase essential equipment, supplies and support additional staff)
- **Shelter** ([\\$4.3 million](#) additional housing and homelessness support; [\\$20 million](#) to cap electricity prices and water bills for the next financial year; [\\$6.7 million](#) by not increasing rent for social housing tenants)
- **Personal Safety** ([\\$2.7 million](#) additional support for family and domestic violence responses; and \$2.5 million to enhance child safety and well-being systems)
- **Access to Basic Knowledge** ([\\$10 million](#) in school revitalisation; [\\$13 million](#) in waived school levies)
- **Health and Wellness** ([\\$4 million](#) support for mental health support services in response to COVID19)

The Tasmanian Government also announced at least \$145 million in small business grants, fee waivers and increased air freight services in its economic response to the impact of COVID19.

Compared to its economic peers (SA, VIC, QLD, NSW), Tasmania is largely performing within expected ranges for overall social progress, and the domains that make it up. It is performing better than expected on environmental quality, personal rights, and personal freedom and choice, and is performing worse than expected on access to information and communication, health and wellness, and access to higher education.

The Tasmanian Government's investment in policy responses that support Health and Wellness and Access to Higher Education may help to address these vulnerabilities. A lack of policy response that supports Access to Information and Communication during COVID19 may further disadvantage Tasmania as it recovers from COVID19.

## Victoria

GSP per capita 2018	2018 SPI Score	COVID19 infections per 100,000
\$63,905	56.46	86

In 2018, Victoria ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in overall social progress. Victoria's lowest performing components of social progress included:

- Personal Freedom and Choice
- Environmental Quality
- Access to Information and Communication
- Inclusiveness

The Victorian Government have announced responses that may help address the following vulnerabilities:

- **Inclusiveness** ([\\$11.3 million](#) support for multicultural communities; [\\$17 million](#) in support for Victorians with a disability; [\\$45 million](#) International Student Emergency Relief fund)
- **Access to Basic Education and Access to Information and Communication** ([\\$4.7 million](#) emergency support package for regional print media; [21,000 internet dongles](#) for school students engaged in remote learning)

Additional responses have announced additional measures that speak to other components of social progress:

- **Nutrition and Basic Medical Care** ([\\$1.9 billion](#) health funding boost to increase hospital bed capacity; [\\$437 million](#) funding boost for additional staff, PPE equipment and support for public health staff)
- **Water and Sanitation** ([\\$45 million](#) for enhanced daily cleaning for every school for all of Term 2 and 3)
- **Shelter** ([\\$6 million](#) funding for homelessness organisations providing support for people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness due to COVID19; [\\$8.8 million](#) funding to provide healthcare and supported accommodation for 200 rough sleepers for 6 months)
- **Personal Safety** ([\\$40.2 million](#) in crisis accommodation and specialist services for people suffering or at risk of family violence.
- **Health and Wellness** ([\\$59.4 million](#) mental health package)
- **Personal Rights** ([\\$17.5 million](#) in additional funding for frontline legal assistance services in response to coronavirus)
- **Access to Higher Education** ([\\$260.8 million](#) TAFE and training systems package; [\\$350 million](#) fund to support Victorian university capital works, research and partnerships)

However, Victoria has also introduced a number of policy initiatives in response to COVID19 that could negatively impact social progress:

- **Personal freedom and choice**  
[Victoria Police](#) have been given the power to issue on-the-spot fines to individuals and businesses who do not follow public health risk directions. Policing and fines disproportionately target minority groups, and it is possible that these fines will be unequally concentrated amongst Indigenous people, migrants, and lower socioeconomic groups. Such a disparity reflects an unequal standards of personal rights and personal freedom and choice in the community.  
The decision to enforce [a rapid hard-lockdown](#) on 3,000 public housing residents in Melbourne was enforced with less lead time, a harder restriction on movement, and a significant police presence. Residents are typically lower income, from refugee or migrant communities, or Aboriginal backgrounds. While the lockdown decision was made to [prevent an outbreak](#) in confined quarters, it is notable that these restrictions were disproportionate to other lockdown measures enforced in other areas of Melbourne. Preventative health measures should ensure that [adequate food, medical care, and translation](#) are provided to residents prior to enforcing hard lockdowns.

# Australian Social Progress Index

## Identifying COVID-19 Vulnerabilities



The Victorian Government also announced at least \$2.1 billion in business support funds, tax relief, and support for re-employing Victorians who lost work in its response to the impact of COVID19.

Compared to its economic peers (QLD, SA, NSW, TAS), Victoria is largely performing within expected ranges for overall social progress and Foundations of Wellbeing. It is performing marginally better than expected for Basic Human Needs, and marginally worse than expected for Opportunity. Victoria is performing better than expected in personal safety, and health and wellness, but performing worse than expected for personal freedom and choice.

Victoria's social policy responses have covered a wide range of social progress components, and demonstrates a holistic approach to social support during times of crisis. However, Victoria was also one of the worst performing jurisdictions in Personal Freedom and Choice; actions such as fines and restrictions of movement should be considered through a justice lens to ensure that already marginalised groups are not disproportionately targeted or impacted by measures intended to ensure public safety.



## Western Australia

GSP per capita 2018	2018 SPI Score	COVID19 infections per 100,000
\$99,923	50.28	25

Western Australia ranked 7<sup>th</sup> out of 8 States and Territories in all years that the Australian SPI was calculated. Western Australia's lowest performing components in 2018 included:

- Personal Freedom and Choice
- Inclusiveness
- Access to Information and Communications
- Access to Advanced Education

The Western Australian Government have announced responses that may help address the following vulnerabilities:

- **Inclusiveness** ([\\$2.1 million](#) funding for grant funding of regional art and cultural activity delivery; grants up to [\\$10,000](#) to support not-for-profit organisations and community groups across the Kimberley region; [\\$159 million](#) COVID19 Relief Fund to meet increased demand for food, clothing and homelessness support; [\\$1.5 million](#) package to support Western Australian artists)
- **Access to Advanced Education** ([\\$100m](#) short-term lending facility to support local governments and universities)

Additional responses have announced additional measures that speak to other components of social progress:

- **Nutrition and Basic Medical Care** ([\\$2.9 million](#) funding for local COVID-19 related research and infrastructure; [\\$15 million](#) worth of clinical equipment to boost the public health system's response to the COVID-19 crisis)
- **Shelter** ([\\$30 million](#) for grants of up to \$2,000 for residential tenants who have lost their job and face financial hardship; expanded eligibility for [Energy Assistance Payment](#))
- **Health and Wellness** ([\\$455,000](#) toward mental health campaign to help manage wellbeing during the pandemic)
- **Personal Rights** (increase in [Legal Aid WA](#) services for those experiencing hardship due to COVID19)

However, Western Australia has also introduced a number of policy initiatives in response to COVID19 that could negatively impact social progress:

- **Environmental Quality**  
[\\$28 million](#) for the Environment Online initiative led by the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) to streamline environmental assessment for major industry projects; [20 percent](#) reduction in Mines Safety Levy to provide financial relief to mining companies. Western Australia's high GSP per capita is largely due to its mining exports which has negative implications for environmental quality and protection in the State.
- **Personal Freedom and Choice**  
[\\$91 million](#) additional funding for police and surveillance equipment in response to COVID19; on-the-spot fines for individuals and businesses that disobey self-isolation and gathering directives; up to [10 years' imprisonment](#) if found guilty of assaulting a frontline worker in circumstances where they know they have COVID-19 or create a belief, suspicion or fear that they have COVID-19. Policing and fines disproportionately target minority groups, and it is possible that these fines will be unequally concentrated amongst Indigenous people, migrants, and lower socioeconomic groups. Such a disparity reflects an unequal standards of personal rights and personal freedom and choice in the community.



# Australian Social Progress Index Identifying COVID-19 Vulnerabilities



The Western Australian Government also announced at least \$987 million in stimulus packages, land tax relief, building and construction packages and business support funds in its response to the impact of COVID19.

Compared to its economic peers (NT, ACT, NSW, QLD), WA is performing worse than expected in overall social progress and its three domains. It is performing worse than expected on water and sanitation, personal safety, personal freedom and choice, and inclusiveness. It is, however, performing better than expected on shelter.

Western Australia's policy responses have primarily responded to basic human needs such as Nutrition and Basic Medical Care and Shelter, but is at risk of widening its underperformance in Personal Freedom and Choice.

