

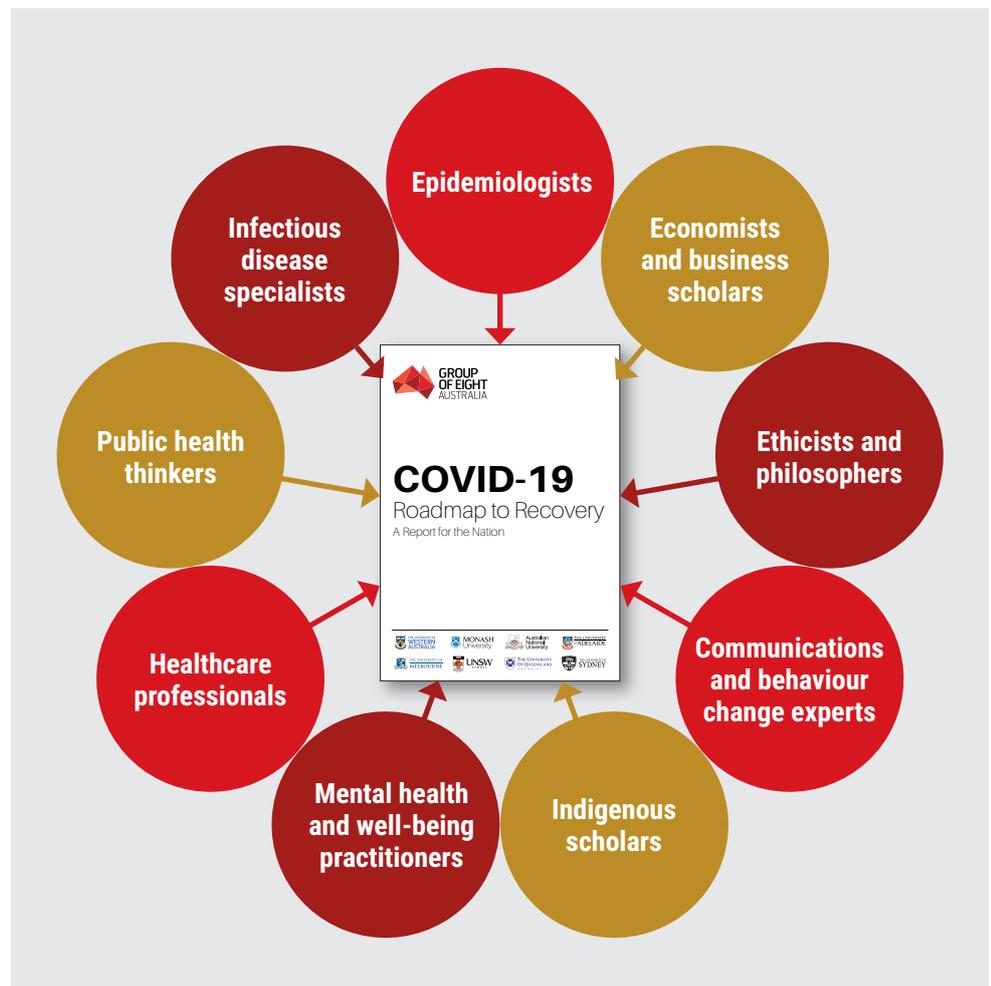
Roadmap to Recovery

Expert research can help Government plot
the best path forward

To chart a Roadmap to

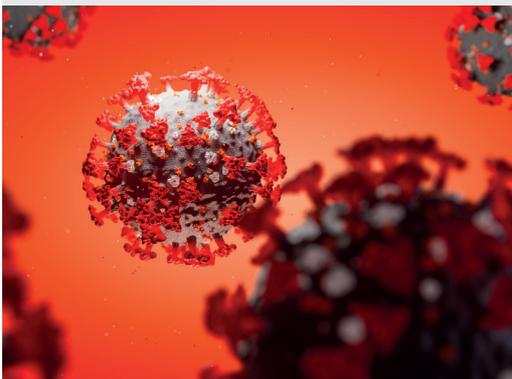
Recovery, the Group of Eight convened more than one hundred of the Australia's leading epidemiologists, infectious disease specialists, public health thinkers, healthcare professionals, mental health and well-being practitioners, indigenous scholars, communications and behaviour change experts, ethicists, philosophers, economists and business scholars from the Group of Eight universities.

The group developed this Roadmap in less than three weeks, through remote meetings and a special collaborative reasoning platform, in the context of a rapidly changing pandemic.



Two Options for Australia's Pandemic Response

Australia is unique and fortunate to have two options – elimination or controlled adaptation. This is only feasible because of our success in controlling the virus so far. From the peak of the epidemic in late March when we saw nearly 500 cases a day, the number of new cases now are less than 25 per day. During the peak, 90 per cent of cases were imported or as a direct consequence of importation, a pathway that has now been practically stopped. Australia's testing rate is amongst the highest in the world, and its test positivity rate and case fatality rate amongst the best anywhere. This confirms the Government's strategy in controlling the epidemic and the population's embrace of it.



Option 1: Elimination Strategy

- To achieve this elimination Australia would likely have to continue the lockdown in certain jurisdictions beyond mid-May, possibly for another 30 days. It necessitates waiting for local cases to fall to zero and then maintaining this for two incubation periods ie about two weeks.
- This strategy will require extensive testing and contact tracing but modelling shows the extra testing should be achievable with reasonable additional investment.
- The elimination strategy should lead to fewer total infections, hospitalisations and deaths, and better protection of vulnerable populations than any of the alternatives.
- Once achieved, the psychological sense of safety and well-being that would result from elimination of all local transmission would allow for a fuller and more vigorous recovery of the economy.
- It is hard to predict exactly when the cases of locally acquired disease might fall to zero, and whether current measures may need to be enhanced to achieve it. Hence the option entails greater uncertainty regarding the *timing* of relaxation of social distancing measures.
- The number of asymptomatic carriers in Australia is not known and may pose a potential risk to this strategy. However modelling shows that provided the number of asymptomatic cases is modest the strategy should still be viable.
- If some States have achieved elimination and others have not, it will require extended travel barriers within Australia, as well as maintaining strict restrictions on inward and outbound international travel.
- The risk of re-introduction of cases from overseas will remain, requiring strict international border control measures. Australia's unique geography, strong border control and quarantine procedures would enable this.

Option 2: Controlled Adaptation Strategy

- The major immediate advantage of this strategy is that the phased lifting of restrictions can begin as early as mid-May.
- The major long-term advantage of this approach is that it acknowledges the high likelihood of prolonged global circulation of this infection and starts off by preparing Australians and the health system to adapt to living with the ongoing risk of infections. The approach provides a feasible strategy to safely manage current and future infection within the health system.
- The strategy accepts a slightly higher number of cases, hospitalisations and deaths.
- This strategy will require extensive testing and contact tracing but with a special emphasis on a very tight feedback to those managing the public health response so that they can adjust the restrictions, in regions, or in segments of the population, as appropriate.
- What is hard to predict is how confident the public will feel when restrictions are lifted with new cases ongoing, therefore economic and social life may resume slower, even though restrictions may be lifted earlier.