



Business reports about the COVID-19 pandemic, March 2020

In the two weeks to the end of March 2020, about 140 Australian businesses reported details to Ai Group about their experience of COVID-19 to date.

This two-week period saw the introduction of a range of measures and supports in response to COVID-19, introduced by Australia’s national, state and local governments.

Around 140 businesses provided detailed responses to three key questions:

1. What is the impact of COVID-19 on your workplace or business so far?
2. What has been your response?
3. What would help you manage your business response to COVID-19 (e.g. from Ai Group, government, community groups)?

Who answered in March?

State	Responses	Industry	Responses
NSW	50	Business services	34
VIC	57	Consumer services	14
QLD	27	Manufacturing*	46
Other states	8	Manufacturing - machinery & equipment	19
		Manufacturing - metal products	20
		Construction & mining services	9
TOTAL	142	TOTAL	142

*excluding machinery & equipment and metal products. Includes food & beverages, chemicals, and other manufacturing.

The impact of COVID-19 on business so far

- More than 40% of businesses have experienced reduced demand from customers, with a little over 10% reporting increased customer demand.
- There has been a steep rise in workload as a result of new OH&S policies and procedures around hygiene (34%) and working from home (25%).
- Employees are also anxious, with 31% of businesses saying there is increased anxiety levels within their workforce.
- One in five businesses are reporting disruptions to supply, inputs, imports and freight, with 5% experiencing an increase in costs.

Business response so far

- Well over a third of businesses now have staff working at home or remotely, with just under 9 per cent of businesses needing to reduce staff working hours.
- One business in every 20 has had to reduce staff numbers, while only 2% have had to increase work hours or hire new staff.
- Businesses have also increased communication to staff and had to vary their terms for customers, suppliers or banks in response to the crisis.

What would help businesses manager their response to COVID-19

- At the top of businesses' wish-list is more clear and concise information. Almost 50% of businesses called for clear instructions and rules, while 48% wanted more information.
- One on three businesses needed financial assistance with more than 10% asking for assistance with employee management.
- Almost 9% of businesses would like improved access to PPE and hygiene products.

Summary tables and charts can be found on the following pages.

COVID-19 Advice and Resources

In addition to the reports summarised below (and not included in this summary), Ai Group receives a steady stream of information from Australian businesses about the effects of COVID-19 from:

- thousands of phone calls to the Ai Group members' Workplace Advice Line, requesting assistance with workplace health and safety, leave arrangements and other matters;
- comments in the monthly Ai Group Performance of Manufacturing, Performance of Construction and Performance of Services indices.
- direct participation by business leaders in meetings, discussions, working groups and other forums with Ai Group, with each other and with national and state government agencies; and
- industry reports from Ai Group's national network of Entrepreneurs Programme advisers.

Tools and advice to help employers to respond to the many challenges presented by COVID-19 can be found on our website [here](#).

1. What is the impact of COVID-19 on your workplace or business so far?

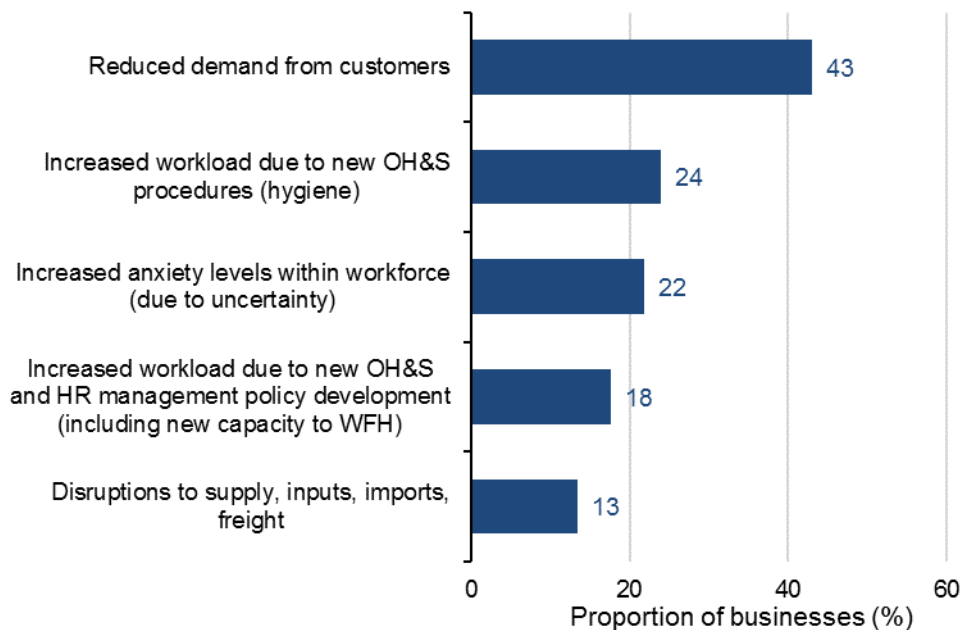
Businesses could provide details of one or more effects on their business.

**Table 1.1: What is the impact of COVID-19 on your workplace or business so far?
Proportion of all businesses (142), top 5 responses**

What is the impact of COVID-19 on your workplace or business so far?	%
Reduced demand from customers	43
Increased workload due to new OH&S procedures (hygiene)	24
Increased anxiety levels within workforce (due to uncertainty)	22
Increased workload due to new OH&S and HR management policy development*	18
Disruptions to supply, inputs, imports, freight	13

*including new capacity to work from home

**Chart 1.1: What is the impact of COVID-19 on your workplace or business so far?
Proportion of all businesses (142), top 5 responses**



**Table 1.2: What is the impact of COVID-19 on your workplace or business so far?
Proportion of businesses by state, top 5 responses**

What is the impact of COVID-19 on your workplace or business so far?	NSW	VIC	QLD
Reduced demand from customers	36	50	30
Increased workload due to new OH&S procedures (hygiene)	20	30	14
Increased anxiety levels within workforce (due to uncertainty)	16	28	12
Increased workload due to new OH&S and HR management policy development*	12	10	16
Disruptions to supply, inputs, imports, freight	14	14	9

**including new capacity to work from home

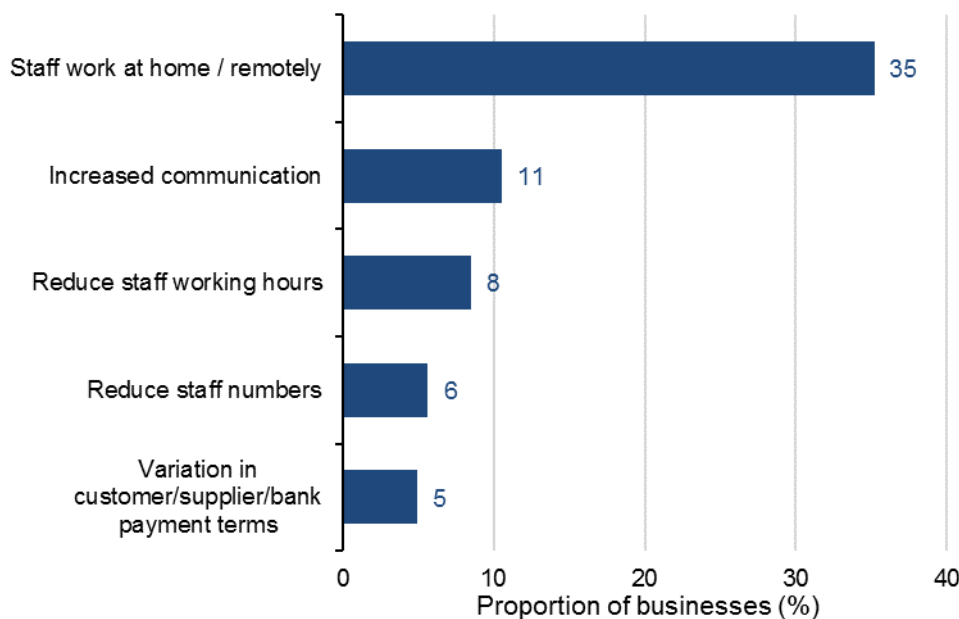
2. What has been your response so far?

Businesses could provide details on multiple responses.

**Table 2.1: What has been your response so far?
Proportion of all businesses (142), top 5 responses**

What has been your response?	%
Staff work at home / remotely	35
Increased communication	11
Reduce staff working hours	8
Reduce staff numbers	6
Variation in customer/supplier/bank payment terms	5

**Chart 2.1: What has been your response so far?
Proportion of all businesses (142), top 5 responses**



**Table 2.2: What has been your response so far?
Proportion of businesses by state, top 5 responses,**

What has been your response so far?	NSW	VIC	QLD
Staff work at home / remotely	36	36	24
Increased communication	10	10	8
Reduce staff working hours	8	12	4
Reduce staff numbers	10	2	2
Variation in customer/supplier/bank payment terms	6	4	4

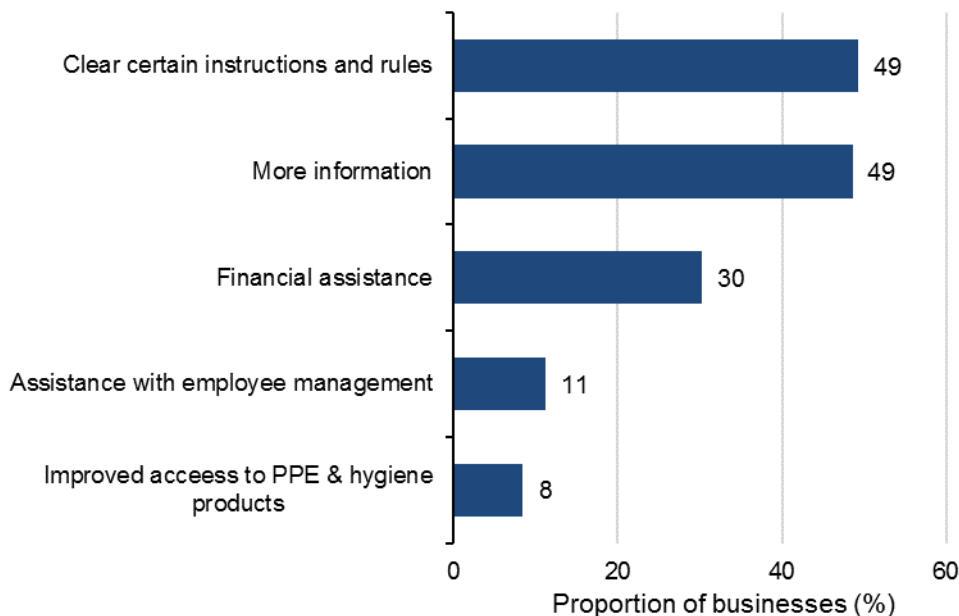
3. What would help you manage your business response to COVID-19?

Businesses could provide details on multiple responses.

**Table 3.1: What would help manage your business response to COVID-19?
Proportion of all businesses (142), top 5 responses**

What would help you manage your business response to COVID-19?	%
Clear certain instructions and rules	49
More information	49
Financial assistance	30
Assistance with employee management	11
Improved access to PPE & hygiene products	8

**Chart 3.1: What would help manage your business response to COVID-19?
Proportion of all businesses (142), top 5 responses**



**Table 3.2: What would help manage your business response to COVID-19?
Proportion of businesses by state, top 5 responses**

What would help manage your business response to COVID-19?	NSW	VIC	QLD
Clear certain instructions and rules	48	50	28
More information	46	64	22
Financial assistance	30	38	18
Assistance with employee management	8	6	10
Improved access to PPE & hygiene products	8	8	6