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ACCOUNTANTS SUPPORTIVE OF PANDEMIC RESPONSE BUT URGE GREATER NATIONAL UNITY

The accounting profession supports the way Australian governments have managed COVID-19, but urges greater national unity and transparency, according to CPA Australia.

In October, CPA Australia, which is one of the world's largest accounting bodies, conducted an online survey of 644 members to ascertain their attitudes to government responses to COVID-19. The survey results provide statistically robust evidence to inform the organisation's ongoing policy and advocacy activities in response to COVID-19.

CPA Australia General Manager External Affairs Dr Jane Rennie said, "CPA Australia members have a strong sense of public interest, and this was reflected in their responses.

"Respondents ranked public health as the single highest priority, followed by long-term economic recovery planning. Taken together, long-term and short-term economic recovery planning outranked public health as a priority.

"Although a majority of respondents believed that border closures have contributed positively to public health, the vast majority thought they have had a negative impact on the Australian economy."

At a national level, 71.5 per cent of respondents rated the Federal Government's response to the pandemic as 'good' or 'very good'. Respondents were more mixed about the impact and effectiveness of state government actions.

The Victorian Government's response to the pandemic was more polarising. Victorian-based respondents were frustrated by a perceived lack of decision-making consistency and transparency in that State.

Dr Rennie said, "The prolonged lockdown has undoubtedly contributed to a more pessimistic view of government decision making in Victoria.

"Overall optimism regarding business conditions, employment conditions and the economy is not high. Seventy-three per cent of Victorians were not optimistic or only slightly optimistic about business conditions, compared to 60 per cent of other Australians on the same measure."

Regardless of their state of residence, respondents wanted governments at all levels to show greater national unity when responding to the impacts of the pandemic.

"Over 86 per cent of respondents rated having a unified national approach as 'very' or 'extremely important' for managing COVID-19," Dr Rennie said.

"Having multiple state and national approaches was not viewed favourably by respondents and was seen by some as associated with political game playing."

In comments provided, several respondents also highlighted the need for increased transparency and clarity of government announcements, to assist individuals and businesses to understand how announced measures apply.

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About CPA Australia

CPA Australia is one of the world's largest accounting bodies, with more than 166,000 members working in 100 countries and regions and supported by 19 offices globally. Our core services to members include education, training, technical support and advocacy. Employees and members work together with local and international bodies to represent the views and concerns of the profession to governments, regulators, industries, academia and the community. Visit cpaaustralia.com.au

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