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The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister

Dear Prime Minister

I am writing in regard to your urgent consideration of government responses to COVID-19 and the definition of the 'essential services' that should remain in operation.

As we inevitably move towards shutting down parts of our economy to deal with the health threat of coronavirus, it is vital that the designation of essential services is appropriately broad and includes the supply chains necessary to allow those essential services to continue to operate. The definition of essential services also needs to be coordinated on a national basis to minimise confusion; to allow the free movement of goods and services across borders; and to ensure that it is clear to business operators which services may continue to operate during shut-downs.

Health services, pharmaceuticals and health equipment are clearly essential. As are energy generation and distribution and telecommunications. Food production, goods required for hygiene and sanitisation are critical as is waste collection and disposal. It is no less important that the industries that support the supply and distribution of essential goods and services are able to operate. This includes a range of logistics, manufacturing, maintenance and construction businesses and their supply chains.

A clear definition of the range of industries and clear and consistent communication across the country are critical. Coordination of the approaches of the Commonwealth and the states and territories is central to both the communications task and to achieving consistency along national supply chains.

There should also be an ability to adjust the definition of 'essential' in the light of experience and emerging circumstances.

I would be happy to discuss this issue with you or our office in more detail at any time. Thank you for all your efforts individually and jointly to help reduce the spread of the virus and to keep our communities safe.

Yours sincerely,