

## Greater investment needed in public pathology to maintain pandemic preparedness

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Public pathology displayed exemplary leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic in Victoria, but ongoing investment is required to maintain pandemic preparedness.

A new perspectives brief published today by the Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association's Deeble Institute for Health Policy Research reviews the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Victoria from the lens of government owned and operated pathology services, and provides recommendations for strengthening public pathology services across Australia.

'Governments and services involved in Australia's COVID-19 response have faced numerous challenges in testing and managing infections from the novel SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19,' says CEO Public Pathology Australia, Jenny Sikorski.

'The majority of COVID-19 cases in Australia have been in Victoria, with 20,479 cases and 820 deaths. Victorian public pathology providers' innovative and agile response was key to protecting and supporting the community during the pandemic.

'Public pathology providers established new laboratory assays and work processes, collected and tested specimens from a multitude of locations and established new ways to report results.

'However, there were capacity deficits in the Victorian response that needed to be filled by the private sector – at significant financial cost and leading to fragmentation.

'In order to best protect the community and public health in the face of another wave or pandemic, ongoing investment in public pathology is required. There should be a focus on technical and scientific leadership, engagement models, workflows and reporting requirements, laboratory and workforce capacity building and maintenance,' says Ms Sikorski.

*Victoria's response to COVID-19 laboratory testing: A public pathology perspective is available [online](#). More information on AHHA and the Deeble Institute for Health Policy Research is available at [ahha.asn.au](http://ahha.asn.au). This media release is available [online](#).*

**The Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association (AHHA) is the national peak body for public and not-for-profit hospitals, Primary Health Networks, and community and primary healthcare services. Public Pathology Australia is the national peak body for public pathology in Australia.**