



## Roundtable Summary – Economic Response

**Date:** Monday 20 May 2024

**Host:** Dr Angela Jackson, Panel Member, Commonwealth Government COVID-19 Response Inquiry

**Participants:** This roundtable brought together a range of economic experts from across academia and industry to discuss the effectiveness of the Australian Government’s economic response during the pandemic.

### Purpose of this roundtable

- The COVID-19 pandemic had extraordinary health and economic implications around the world and in Australia. In response, extraordinary economic supports were put in place to support health measures, maintain confidence, and support households and businesses through the pandemic.
- This roundtable provided participants with the opportunity to discuss the effectiveness of the Australian Government’s economic response. Participants were also encouraged to provide suggestions on how to prioritise actions and improve economic responses for a future public health crisis.

### What we heard at the roundtable

- The public health and economic responses to a pandemic are linked. While the prioritisation of public health outcomes was necessary and important during the early months of the pandemic due to the high level of uncertainty, a greater balance between health, economic, social and other outcomes was needed as the pandemic progressed, uncertainty reduced and other impacts became more apparent.
- The speed and overall size of the government’s initial fiscal response was important in supporting households and businesses, but necessitated compromises in policy design which in future could be avoided through the developing a toolkit of policy measures for use during a pandemic. This should be supported by a broader framework that outlines key principles that underpin effective economic responses during a public health emergency.
- There were distributional differences in the impact of economic measures on communities and/or industries. Measures should be designed to be adaptable to the severity of the crisis as new information is available, to allow for policies to be tailored, and to mitigate any unintended consequences and gaps.

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- The coordination of monetary policy and fiscal policy is important in a crisis, and measures should be balanced and complementary. The scale of the initial fiscal and monetary support was likely warranted during a period of uncertainty. However, the winding back of these measures as the pandemic progressed was too slow.
- Communication and transparency of information are key to enabling community compliance with restrictions and building trust in government decisions, particularly when the costs of those decisions are borne by communities.