



## Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) WoG Talking Points

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### 1. KEY FACTS AND FIGURES (as at 0600 hrs 30 March 2020)

#### Australian Snapshot

Total Australian cases	4,093
Total new cases since 1500 hrs yesterday	127
Total lives lost	16
Tests conducted	Over 214,000

#### Global Snapshot

Total global cases	692,079
Total lives lost	35,468
Countries reporting their first case	-
Total number of countries/regions with reported cases	206 (including Mainland China, Hong Kong SAR, Taiwan and Macau)

### 2. KEY EVENTS UPDATE (last 24 hrs – coming days)

- On 29 March 2020, the Prime Minister announced a \$1.1 billion package that boosts mental health services, domestic violence support, Medicare assistance for people at home, and emergency food relief.
  - Medicare-subsidised telehealth services have been expanded, allowing Australians to access support in their own home using their telephone if a video link cannot be established.
  - This expansion of Telehealth will allow continuation of normal patient care, and reduce the need for scarce Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Following National Cabinet on 29 March 2020 the Prime Minister announced tighter restrictions for outdoor gatherings to commence midnight 30 March 2020



- National Cabinet agreed to limit both indoor and outdoor gatherings to two persons only. Exceptions to this limit include:
  - People of the same household going out together;
  - Funerals - a maximum of 10 people;
  - Wedding - a maximum of 5 people;
  - Family units.
- National Cabinet's strong guidance to all Australians is to stay home unless for:
  - shopping for what you need - food and necessary supplies;
  - medical or health care needs, including compassionate requirements;
  - exercise in compliance with the public gathering requirements;
  - work and study if you can't work or learn remotely.
- National Cabinet agreed that playgrounds, skate parks and outside gyms in public places will be closed.
- National Cabinet advised seniors and people with existing health conditions to self isolate at home to the maximum extent practicable. The following groups should should quarantine at home wherever possible:
  - People over 70 years old,
  - people over 60 years old with comorbidities,
  - and Aboriginal and Torres Strait islanders over 50 years old.

### 3. SITUATION

#### Australian cases and epidemiology

- As at 06:00 hrs on 30 March 2020, a total of 4,093 cases of COVID-19 have been reported in Australia, including 16 deaths.
- There have been at least 197 cases associated with the Ruby Princess cruise ship with the majority of them being NSW cases, and a subset being interstate cases. One of the elderly passengers is reported to have died.
  - There are also cases associated with several other cruise ships.
- The median age of COVID-19 cases is 48 years, range 0–98 years.
- There is a relatively equal ratio of male to female cases across most age groups.
- Of the deaths reported, the median age is 77 years (range 54–94 years).
- Of the 16 confirmed deaths
  - 7 were NSW residents, including 4 aged care residents, 1 Ruby Princess cruise ship passenger
  - 2 were WA residents, including 1 Diamond Princess cruise ship passenger and 1 Celebrity Solstice cruise ship passenger
  - 3 were Queensland residents, including 1 Voyage of the Seas cruise ship passenger
  - 4 were Victorian residents
- Of the newly reported cases in the last week, the majority have been from New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria.
- The majority of Australian cases acquired their infection overseas, including on board cruise ships or associated with recent travel to Europe or the Americas.
- To date, more than 214,000 tests have been conducted across Australia.

#### Number of cases and deaths by source of infection and jurisdiction<sup>#\*^</sup>

Source of infection	Jurisdiction
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	Australia	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA
Overseas acquired	2,700	62	1,185	14	476	194	58	444	267
Locally acquired—contact of a confirmed case	789	9	376	0	87	47	1	241	28
Locally acquired—contact not identified	278	0	228	0	20	4	0	21	5
Locally acquired—contact not identified interstate travel	12	4	0	0	2	4	0	0	2
Under investigation	314	2	129	0	71	38	2	63	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,093</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>1,918</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>656</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>769</b>	<b>311</b>
Deaths	16	0	7	0	3	0	0	4	2

# Cases in this table include Diamond Princess repatriation cases: Qld (3), SA (1), Vic (4), WA (2, including 1 death)

\*Note that under National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System (NNDSS) reporting requirements, cases are reported based on their Australian jurisdiction of residence rather than where they were detected. For example, a case reported previously in the NT in a NSW resident is counted in the national figures as a NSW case.

^ Tasmania has reported three cross border notifications where the case residency is in a different jurisdiction and will therefore be reported by those relevant jurisdictions based on NNDSS reporting requirements.

Summary of testing conducted by Australia and selected countries\*

	Australia	ACT	NSW	NT	Qld	SA	Tas	Vic	WA
Tests conducted	214,487	4,230	94,534	1,881	45,107	24,737	1,720	28,941	13,007

Country	Cases	Tests	Percent COVID-19 positive	Test per 100,000 population	Updated
Australia	4,093	214,487	1.9%	836.8	30-Mar
USA	122,653	130,403	94.1%	39.9	30-Mar
South Korea	9,583	394,141	2.4%	765.8	30-Mar
United Kingdom	19,522	127,737	15.3%	188.2	30-Mar
Austria	8,536	46,441	18.4%	526.4	30-Mar
Canada	5,658	189,626	3.0%	500.4	30-Mar

\* Note: testing criteria varies between countries and will be variable over time for each country dependant on their local epidemic context. For some countries the number of tests do not necessarily reflect the number of individuals tested, especially where for example additional testing has been conducted to confirm a positive result or to check if a person has cleared their infection. Additionally, testing data from countries will also be influenced by laboratory capacity and populations targeted for testing, all of which will vary over time.

**International cases and epidemiology**

- As at 06:00 hrs on 30 March 2020, a total of 692,079 cases of COVID-19 have been reported globally in 206 countries and regions, including 35,468 deaths.
  - Of all deaths reported globally, the majority have been from Italy (37%), Spain (18%) and the Hubei Province of China (9%).
- Since 29 March 2020, there have been 27,155 new cases, including 4,620 new deaths, reported.
  - Large increases, including instances of export to other countries, especially in respective regions, continue to be reported in Europe (including Italy, Spain, Germany and France) as well as the US, Iran and the UK.
  - Spain reported another new record highest daily death toll with 838 people in the 24 hours before, bringing the total to 6,528 deaths and 78,797 confirmed cases.*
- Chinese data suggest that more than 80% of patients have mild disease, 20% of cases have severe or critical disease.

- Of the confirmed cases reported globally, the case fatality rate is approximately 4.8%. The risk of death is reported to increase with age.
- *Dr. Anthony Fauci, the US government's top expert on infectious diseases, predicted that the US could end up with "millions" of cases of coronavirus and up to 200,000 deaths by the time the pandemic ends.*

## Australian Government Response

- Australia has a world-class health system. Australia's health emergency responses are flexible and scalable, to respond effectively to the evolving situation.
- Australia has been responding to rapid changes in the epidemiology of COVID-19 and activated and is implementing the Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19 plan).
- Australia is well placed to respond to ill travellers and those at risk of contracting infection, with border isolation, surveillance and contact tracing mechanisms already in place.
- A 24/7 National Coronavirus Health Information Line is available on 1800 020 080. The line provides health and situation information on the COVID-19 outbreak.
- The Australian Cyber Security Centre is identifying a range of COVID-19 related malicious websites and associated scams that are being used by cybercriminals to steal the personal and financial information of Australians.
  - The texts and emails are often designed to appear as though they have been sent by the Australian Government or other trusted partner.
- We encourage all Australians to visit the ACSC's [cyber.gov.au](http://cyber.gov.au) website and subscribe to StaySmartOnline – <https://www.staysmartonline.gov.au/> – for advice on how to be protected online, and information on the latest threats and how to respond.
- The Government is collaborating with international partners, to monitor and respond to this malicious activity, including sharing intelligence, lessons and identifying disruption opportunities.
- The Australian Red Cross Lifeblood needs more blood donors. This is an essential service to keep blood flowing to patients across Australia. Current restrictions on travel and access to some services and venues do not prevent you, if you are feeling healthy and well, from going to a Lifeblood donor centre and continuing to donate blood, or becoming a new donor. Donor centres are safe, social distancing arrangements are in place and this critically important activity must continue to ensure Australia's lifeblood keeps flowing.
  - To book a donation, visit [lifelifeblood.com.au](http://lifelifeblood.com.au) or call 13 14 95, or download the Donate Blood app.

Key dates and government response in chronological order	
<b>21 January 2020</b>	'Human coronavirus with pandemic potential' was added as a Listed Human Disease under the Biosecurity Act 2015 enabling the use of enhanced border measures. This was ahead of the WHO International Health Regulations.
<b>1 February</b>	<i>Foreign Nationals from mainland China would not be allowed into Australia</i>
<b>27 February 2020</b>	The Prime Minister announced the activation of the 'Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)'.
<b>1 March 2020</b>	<i>As of 1 March 2020, entry to Australia for persons who have been in Iran in the past 14 days was limited to Australian citizens, permanent residents and their dependents.</i>

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<b>5 March 2020</b>	The Prime Minister announced the set up of national coordination mechanism managed by Department of Home Affairs, through Emergency Management Australia. This will ensure consistent approach across the Commonwealth and state and territory governments and industry.
<b>5 March 2020</b>	From 5 March 2020, for arrivals from Italy, enhanced health screening and temperature testing arrangements were required for travellers from Italy. Foreign nationals who were in the Republic of Korea on or after 5 March 2020 were not allowed to enter Australia for 14 days from the time they had left or transited through the Republic of Korea.
<b>11 March 2020</b>	WHO declared the COVID-19 virus a pandemic.
<b>13 March 2020</b>	The Australian Government advised all Australians to reconsider the need to travel overseas regardless of destination, age or health. (Level 3 of 4 in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade travel advice system).
<b>15 March 2020</b>	The Australian Government advised all passengers arriving in Australia will need to self-isolate for 14 days, and banned cruise ship arrivals.
<b>16 March 2020</b>	Non-essential, static gatherings of more than 500 people banned.
<b>17 March 2020</b>	The Australian Government advised Australians who are already overseas and who wish to return to Australia to do so as soon as possible by commercial means.
<b>18 March 2020</b>	The Governor-General declared a “human biosecurity emergency” under the Biosecurity Act 2015.
<b>18 March 2020</b>	The Prime Minister announced social distancing measures including a ban on non-essential gatherings, of persons of 100 or greater in indoor areas.
<b>18 March 2020</b>	The Australian Government raised the travel advice for anywhere overseas to ‘Do Not Travel’ (level 4 of 4).
<b>19 March 2020</b>	The Prime Minister announced a travel ban will be put in place preventing all foreign nationals from entering Australia effective 2100hrs Friday 20 March 2020.
<b>20 March 2020</b>	National Cabinet agreed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• risk mitigation measures for non-essential indoor gatherings of fewer than 100 people. In a given occupied space, there must be a density of no more than one person per four square metres of floor space. This will be mandated through state and territory regulatory arrangements.</li> <li>• in-principle agreement to the Commonwealth Minister for Health taking action under the Commonwealth Biosecurity Act 2015 to restrict travel into remote communities to prevent the spread of COVID-19.</li> </ul>
<b>20 March 2020</b>	The Prime Minister announced the Federal Budget will be on Tuesday, 6 October 2020.
<b>20 March 2020</b>	State and Territory leaders agreed effective 20 March 2020, each State’s and Territory’s adult correctional system will restructure personal prison visits to help manage the risk posed to prisoners and staff by the introduction of COVID-19 into custodial facilities. Depending on their operational needs, this may include stopping visits in some jurisdictions.
<b>22 March 2020</b>	On 22 March, the Prime Minister and Treasurer announced a second set of economic responses which, combined with previous actions, total \$189 billion across the forward estimates, representing 9.7 per cent of annual GDP. Many facilities are restricted from opening due to stronger social distancing measures.
<b>23 March 2020</b>	The Government will enable all vulnerable general practitioners and other vulnerable health professionals who are currently authorised to use telehealth item numbers, to use telehealth for all consultations.

<b>24 March 2020</b>	<p>On 24 March National Cabinet clarified and strengthened public gathering advice.</p> <p>Leaders noted that the Commonwealth Government will implement a 'do not travel' ban on Australians travelling overseas under the powers of the Biosecurity Act 2015.</p>
<b>25 March 2020</b>	<p>The Australian Government began sending text messages to keep people informed about the national response to COVID-19.</p> <p>Tighter restrictions on social gatherings commenced.</p> <p>Tasmania, the NT, WA, Queensland and SA announced border closures.</p>
<b>25 March 2020</b>	<p>National Cabinet agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to lift the 30-minute maximum time for barbers and hairdressers to spend per patron (effective immediately).</li> <li>The coronavirus testing criteria was expanded following advice from AHPPC.</li> </ul>
<b>27 March 2020</b>	<p>Additional restrictions on cruise ships came into effect including extending the current ban on international cruise ship entry into Australia until 15 June 2020.</p>
<b>27 March 2020</b>	<p>The Prime Minister announced that all incoming travellers from abroad will be quarantined in a hotel or other accommodation for 14 days. This new requirement begins at 11:59 pm, 28 March (Saturday).</p>
<b>29 March 2020</b>	<p>The Prime Minister announced a \$1.1 billion package that boosts mental health services, domestic violence support, Medicare assistance for people at home, and emergency food relief.</p> <p>Tighter public gathering restrictions – no more than 2 people (some exceptions).</p> <p><i>National Cabinet advised seniors and people with existing health conditions to self-isolate at home to the maximum extent practicable.</i></p>

## Health Package

- On 11 March, the Australian Government announced a \$2.4 billion health package to protect all Australians, including vulnerable groups such as the elderly, those with chronic conditions and Indigenous communities, from COVID-19.
  - \$100 million for a new Medicare service for people in home isolation or quarantine to receive health consultations via phone or video (e.g. FaceTime or Skype) (now in place - 715,104 telehealth services and 202,000 pathology tests since 13 March 2020).
  - \$25 million will fund home medicines services (available) which will enable patients to have their PBS prescriptions filled online or remotely and have the medicines delivered to their home (e-prescribing on track for mid May).
  - The national triage phone line will be expanded with an additional \$50.7 million in funding, operating 24/7 to provide advice to patients (expansion underway).
  - \$206.7 million will be invested for up to 100 dedicated respiratory clinics (188 respiratory clinics are operating nationally, including three GP led clinics (Macquarie Park NSW, Morayfield QLD and Nundah QLD), 56 state and territory government fever clinics (cost shared under NPA), and 29 ADF clinics for ADF staff and families.).
  - \$101.2 million will fund education and training aged care workers in infection control, and enable aged care providers to hire extra nurses and aged care workers for both residential and home care (design phase).

- \$30 million will fund the delivery of a new national communications campaign - across all media – to provide people with practical advice on how they can play their part in containing the virus and staying healthy (well advanced).
- The Government will allocate \$30 million from the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) for vaccine, anti-viral and respiratory medicine research
  - Two open competitive grant opportunities are in train:
    - \$8 million to identify and develop antiviral therapies for people infected with COVID-19 (opened 25 March 2020).
    - \$5 million for clinical trials to better treat and manage COVID-19 patients with severe acute respiratory distress, which can be fatal (opened 23 March 2020).
  - A further \$17 million of funding from the MRFF will be invested in the development of a vaccine for COVID-19.
    - \$3.35 million has been committed to vaccine research and clinical trials being progressed at the University of Queensland, in partnership with the Queensland Government (see 'Research' below).
  - This funding is in addition to the \$2 million already allocated from the MRFF for research into a vaccine against COVID-19 (applications under assessment).
  - In addition the Government has announced an investment of more than \$2.6 million in cutting-edge diagnostics research at the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity to increase Australia's ability to conduct widespread testing for the diagnosis and clearance of COVID-19.
  - The Department is reviewing a proposal from the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute for a clinical trial of the use of hydroxychloroquine for prevention of COVID-19 amongst health care workers.

### **Expansion of Medicare-subsidised telehealth services**

- The Primary Care Package announced on 29 March 2020 included three measures:
  - Increased Practice Incentive Payments (PIP),
  - Increased Bulk Billing Incentives, and
  - New temporary Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) items.
- These measures will allow doctors, nurses, midwives and allied health professionals including mental health, to provide telehealth services, encourage practices to bulk bill patients and ensure patients can still access face-to-face care.
- Patients who still need to visit their doctor can continue to do so.
- Currently all services provided using the new temporary MBS telehealth items must be bulk billed.
- Doctors will be able to conduct telehealth consultations from their practices or while they themselves may be in home isolation.
- These measures will reduce public hospital presentations that could have occurred without this telehealth access and reduce PPE consumption.

### **Economic Response - Treasury**

- The Government is acting decisively in the national interest to support households and businesses and address the significant economic consequences of the Coronavirus.
- While the full economic effects from the virus remain uncertain, the outlook has deteriorated since the Government's initial Economic Response announced on 12 March 2020.

- On 22 March, the Prime Minister and Treasurer announced a second set of economic responses which, combined with previous actions, total \$189 billion across the forward estimates, representing 9.7 per cent of annual GDP. These actions provide timely support to affected workers, businesses and the broader community.
- The economic support package includes:
  - Support for households including casuals, sole-traders, retirees and those on income support
  - Assistance for businesses to keep people in a job
  - Regulatory protection and financial support for businesses to stay in business
- Further information about the Economic Response is available on the Treasury website.

### Commonwealth emergency powers

- On 18 March, Governor-General accepted the Commonwealth Government's recommendation that he declare a "human biosecurity emergency" under the Biosecurity Act 2015, given the risks COVID-19 poses to human health and the need to control its spread in Australia.
- The first emergency requirement made under the declaration was to formally prohibit international cruise ships from entering Australian ports. On 27 March 2020, the initial 30 day ban, due to end 15 April, was extended for two months until 15 June 2020.
- On 24 March, the Commonwealth Government noted it will implement a 'do not travel' ban on Australians travelling overseas, under the powers of the Biosecurity Act 2015.
- Commonwealth, States and Territories are implementing emergency powers under respective legislation in order to be able to deal with the spread of COVID-19 as quickly and flexibly as possible.

### Public gatherings

- National Cabinet agreed to risk mitigation measures for non-essential indoor gatherings of fewer than 100 people including the following:
  - Effective 20 March, in a given occupied space, there must be a density of no more than one person per four square metres of floor space. This will be mandated through state and territory regulatory arrangements.
  - Hand hygiene products and suitable waste receptacles must be made available, with frequent cleaning and waste disposal taking place.
  - On 25 March, National Cabinet agreed to tighter restrictions on weddings, funerals, fitness classes, beauty salons, arcades, play centres. Pubs, licensed clubs and hotels (excluding accommodation), places of worship, gyms, indoor sporting venues, cinemas, casinos must close. Takeaway only at restaurants and cafes. Supermarkets, and pharmacies remain open.
- AHPPC noted emerging evidence of community transmission in localised areas within Australia, current issues limiting the capacity to do widespread COVID-19 diagnostic tests and emerging international evidence that, for best effect, social distancing measures are best introduced at the earliest stages of community transmission.
- On 13 March, AHPPC released a statement on public gatherings and testing and put in place social distancing measures to mitigate spread. These measures include:
  - Limiting non-essential organised gatherings to fewer than 500 people.
  - Limiting non-essential meetings or conferences of critical workforce e.g., healthcare professionals and emergency services.

- Encouraging all Australians to exercise personal responsibility for social distancing measures.
- Initiating measures to protect vulnerable populations, such as reducing visitors to all residential care facilities and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

## Cruises

- ABF advised that the Government had made a decision that from all returning cruise vessel passengers must undertake 14 days quarantine at a hotel or other dedicated facility. ABF are working with other agencies, including DFAT, on the logistics of these arrivals.
- Australia has banned all cruise ship arrivals from 0001hrs 16 March 2020. The ban excludes Australian flagged vessels, cruise ships returning to Australia, cruise ships in transit which have left their last international port by 00:00 16 March 2020, ships already in domestic waters and Round Trip Cruises (RTCs). No new cruises will be allowed to commence.
- The Government of Western Australia will determine the management of the 798 Australian citizens on board the Vasco de Gama.
  - All crew and international passengers will remain on the ship until arrangements to fly them home can be made.
  - There are no suspect or confirmed cases of COVID-19 on the ship.
- Exempt cruise ships will be allowed to disembark passengers but will be required to apply to the Maritime Traveller Processing Committee (MTPC) to make port. International visitors will be allowed to disembark. Cruise ship crew must self-isolate for 14 days or for the duration of their stay whichever is shorter.
- The 14 day self-isolation period commences the day the cruise ship departs from the last international port before heading to Australia, unless people on board the ship are unwell and suspected of having COVID-19.
- The self-isolation period applies to any traveller (including passengers or crew) entering Australia including on a cruise ship.
- DFAT (Canberra and Posts) are actively engaging with cruise liners and local authorities to support and facilitate disembarkation so Australians can return home (organised by companies or own means)
  - Posts are in continuing and regular communication with passengers
  - Posts have strongly lobbied to enable port access.
- As at 1200 hrs 29 March 2020, DFAT is aware of and tracking around 18 cruise ships with around 1,836 Australians on board.
- *Panama has permitted transit for both the MS Rotterdam and MS Zaandam through the Panama Canal on humanitarian grounds. It is anticipated that each vessel will dock in Fort Lauderdale in Florida.*
- *Chimu Adventures is proceeding with arrangements for a charter flight to depart in the window of 31 March to 2 April from Montevideo for Australians from the Ocean Atlantic Cruise ship, as well as other Australians in the area who wish to return home.*

## Other consular issues

- As at 1300 hrs 29 March 2020, DFAT is providing consular support to 37 Australians confirmed with COVID-19 overseas and a further 260 Australians who are in quarantine or are subject to host country control measures to control the spread of the COVID-19.

- Our staff continue to provide support to thousands of Australians whose travel has been affected by border closures and local containment efforts. This includes working closely with national governments, local authorities, hospitality and health providers and the cruise line industry, in a very fluid environment to assist Australians, where practically possible.
- DFAT and Infrastructure are working closely with the airline industry (Qantas, Virgin and Qatar Airways) and cruise companies to support Australians to return home by commercial means
  - a non-scheduled charter flight for Australians seeking to return from Peru is expected soon (a contract with Chimu Adventures covering the agreement has been signed).
  - DFAT has also reached agreement for a Chimu flight for Australians to depart Montevideo.

### **Australian Health Protection Principal Committee**

- At the AHPPC daily teleconference held on 29 March 2020, discussion included:
  - Enhanced border measures and how to handle unaccompanied minors arriving on an international flight,
  - AHPPC re-confirmed their previous advice around the handling of international flight crews, and
  - Scoped further work on guidance for healthcare workers around personal protection equipment.
- On 30 March, AHPPC will consider the impact of some restaurant closures have had on the trucking industry and finalising advice back to the education sector.
- The Communicable Diseases Network Australia (CDNA) met on 29 March 2020 and continues to progress work relating to the ongoing surveillance needs for COVID-19, including development of a Surveillance plan. Members also discussed forward priorities for the case definition and contact management.
- AHPPC, on the advice of CDNA, continues to monitor the effectiveness of current travel restrictions and self-quarantine procedures for international travellers.

### **Australian border measures**

- On 27 March 2020, the Prime Minister announced that all incoming travellers from abroad will be quarantined in a hotel or other designated accommodation for 14 days. This new requirement began at 11:59 pm, 28 March 2020.
- After arriving in Australia, all travellers will be required to complete their 14 days quarantine in the port of entry; no on-travel is permitted.
  - transit travellers must remain in the airport or if they have a layover, they must self-isolate in their accommodation for that transit period.
- Quarantining of travellers will be led by State and Territory Governments with enforcement through State and Territory police. The Australian Defence Force will help ensure people are staying in quarantine and the Commonwealth will support as required.
- Travel restrictions are in place for foreign nationals, barring entry to Australia. Travel restrictions exemptions:
  - Australian citizens.
  - Permanent residents.
  - Immediate family members of Australian citizens and permanent residents including spouses, minor dependents, legal guardians and de facto partners.

- New Zealand citizens who live in Australia as Australian residents are also exempt, as are New Zealanders transiting to New Zealand.
- Citizens of the following countries can only transit through Australia to return home: Cook Islands, Nauru, Samoa, Fiji, New Caledonia, Solomon Islands, French Polynesia, New Zealand, Timor Leste, Kiribati, Niue, Tonga, Marshall Islands, Palau, Tuvalu, Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, and Vanuatu.
- Foreign nationals departing New Zealand, transiting Australia, to return home between 1200 AEDT 21 March 2020 and 1159 AEDT 24 March 2020 are exempt for this period.
  - A 48 hour extension was granted, expiring on 26 March
  - This exemption does not apply to any foreign nationals who have been in China, Iran, the republic of Korea or Italy in the last 14 days.
  - All transits must occur on the same day as arrival and passengers must remain in the sterile transit area.
- The Australian Government will be issuing Isolation Declaration Cards (IDC) to all incoming travellers. The IDC will ask the traveller if they 'understand they are required by state and territory laws to isolate for 14 days', while collecting personal information for public health follow up by the states and territories.
  - Travellers will complete the IDC on arrival at international airports.
  - Travellers who indicate to border staff they intend to be non-compliant with the self-isolation period will be referred to enhanced health screening areas for follow up by state and territory authorities.
  - If travellers do not comply with their 14 day self-isolation requirements, they may face a range of penalties that exist in each State or Territory.
- Incoming passengers are also being advised through:
  - airline crews making announcements en route into Australia, reading a script from the Department of Health, advising of mandatory isolation requirement.
  - Airline crew are handing out a traveller fact sheet to all incoming travellers.
  - Once in the terminal, ABF Officers and Biosecurity Officers will have an increased presence throughout the airport to facilitate the health screening referral of travellers.
  - ABF officers at the primary line of customs clearance and at Smartgates are providing information on isolation and directing those who are unwell to health authorities.
  - Travellers will also be referred to health screening if they indicate to border staff they feel ill, if they request screening, or if intelligence provided by border agencies indicates screening should be undertaken.
- Immediate family members of Australian citizens or permanent residents, who are holding Temporary visas, need to contact the Department of Home Affairs before attempting to travel. Information is available on the Home Affairs website.
- Before arriving in Australia, all commercial vessels are required to complete reporting about their biosecurity status. This reporting includes specific questions about COVID-19 risk factors.

- The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment assesses all pre-arrival reporting, and where necessary, completes a human health inspection of international vessels.
- All maritime crew are subject to the precautionary 14 day isolation period. During this period crew are only able to disembark to conduct essential vessel functions and they must wear personal protective equipment while performing these functions.
  - these restrictions apply until 14 days has elapsed since any person on-board left a foreign port. Unless crew are unwell or there is a suspected case of COVID-19 on-board.

## Visa Services

- If visa holders wish to remain in Australia beyond the expiry date of their current visa, they must apply for a further visa. Information on staying in Australia beyond their current visa expiry date can be found at: <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/visa-about-to-expire/stay-longer>.
- Visa holders should explore their visa options to find a new visa that suits their circumstances and check whether they can apply for it. Information regarding visa options can be found at: <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-finder>.

## <If asked about access to welfare payments for New Zealanders resident in Australia>

- Appreciate that many New Zealanders resident in Australia, like others in the Australian community, are facing financial hardship at this time.
- New Zealand citizens or permanent residents, residing in Australia, who lose their jobs or have a significant reduction in income, will be eligible for early access to portions of their Australian superannuation.
  - regardless of visa status, date of arrival into Australia and duration of stay in Australia, provided they meet the eligibility criteria.
- The Australian Government is exploring other ways in which we may be able to assist.

## Advice for Australian travellers

- If Australians are overseas and choose not to leave, or are unable to, we recommend they follow the advice of local authorities and minimise their risk of exposure, including by self-isolating. The Australian Government's ability to provide consular assistance in some places may be limited due to restrictions on movement and other services.
- Travellers arriving in Australia who have not completed the 14 day quarantine period may put the health and wellbeing of other passengers, crew and Australians at risk.

## Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

- Many countries are now implementing domestic and border measures to lessen the spread of COVID-19, including social distancing practices, lock-downs, travel bans and other restrictions.
  - We continue to monitor and report on these measures.
- More than 25,000 calls (as at 1200h 29 March) have been received to the Emergency Call Unit since it was reactivated on 13 March, as well as thousands of emails and social media messages.

## Australian Border Force

- The ABF Commissioner has exercised his discretionary powers to provide border clearance to a small number of individuals to allow them to enter Australia.

- All of those cleared to enter Australia are required to undertake a health screening and to self-isolate for a period of 14 days.
- Since 1 February 2020 the following cumulative totals are reported:
  - **1,779** flights to Australia have been cancelled.
  - 30 arriving passengers had their visas cancelled. Of these, 20 visas have been reissued, resulting in 10 visa cancellations.
  - 474 passengers were refused permission to board their flight to Australia.

## Department of Education, Skills and Employment

- On 22 March, National Cabinet agreed to the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) advice that at this time schools, like other education institutions (child care services and universities) should remain open. The health advice on schools has not changed.
  - The AHPPC advises that pre-emptive closures are not proportionate or effective as a public health intervention to prevent community transmission of COVID-19.
  - Families will be allowed to make their own decisions about keeping children home from school, and will be responsible for ensuring they practise the social distancing expected of the community.
  - State and territory governments may elect to bring forward term holidays to allow schools time to develop and implement alternate, at-home learning models.
- International students can contact [international.students@dese.gov.au](mailto:international.students@dese.gov.au) or 1300 981 621 (9am to 5pm AEDST Monday to Friday).
- Early Childhood education and care:
  - Families now have 62 days available per child for absences from child care – an increase of 20 days for the current 2019-20 financial year.
  - Families will continue to receive the Child Care Subsidy where a child is absent from child care to help manage the impact of COVID-19.
  - Families will also be able to access additional absences from care for their children in relation to COVID-19, without the need for medical evidence/certificate.
  - The Government is also waiving the current obligation of child care services to require a family to pay gap fees if a service is directed to close based on public health advice. In these circumstances, and where the service continues to charge families fees, Child Care Subsidy will continue to be paid. This will not apply where a centre closes voluntarily.
  - If child care services close for reasons outside of their control, but related to COVID-19, services may be eligible for Child Care Community Fund Special Circumstance grants.
- Schools:
  - Expert health advice on schools has not changed, and the AHPPC does not recommend schools be shut at this time.
  - All governments recognise the importance of education, and are committed to supporting the continuity of education of students throughout the response to COVID-19.
  - Options for online or other remote delivery of education should be offered where possible.
  - If your child is sick, do not send them to school.
  - Students and their parents should refer to their relevant state or territory education authority website for further information.

- Employment:
  - The Government is supporting businesses to manage cash flow challenges and retain employees.
  - Assistance includes cash flow support to businesses and temporary measures to provide relief for financially distressed businesses.
  - Mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants have been lifted from 23 March until 31 March 2020, as capacity to the MyGov website is restored.
  - Job seekers and participants will not be penalised for not being able to report their attendance at appointments or activities. Payments will not be suspended and no compliance action will be taken.
  - If congestion continues to affect access to MyGov, the Government will consider extending these arrangements.
  - Employment services can assist employers to fill critical vacancies identified in the current labour market.
- Vocational education and training:
  - The Government is supporting small business to retain their apprentices and trainees.
  - Eligible employers can apply for a wage subsidy of 50 per cent of the apprentice's or trainee's wage.
  - Subsidies will cover the 9 months from 1 January 2020 to 30 September 2020.
  - Employers can register for the subsidy from early-April 2020. Final claims for payment must be lodged by 31 December 2020.
  - The Government is working with VET regulators to support over 4,000 Registered Training Organisations and their students, including advice on the latest health information, and on adopting flexible and online modes of delivering education and training.

### **Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment**

- SARS-CoV-2 virus has not been reported in domestic animals or wildlife in Australia.
- There is no conclusive evidence that the virus is able to transmit from animal-to-person or animal-to-animal.
- There are two possible cases of person-to-animal transmission in pet dogs in Hong Kong.
- There is no evidence that dogs or other domestic animals are important in the spread of the virus. The current spread of the virus is due to transmission between people.
- Animal owners should continue to implement good hygiene practices where animals are kept, including washing their hands after contact with animals.
- Infected animal owners should not come into contact with domestic animals, where possible.
- To protect their domestic animals and themselves, people should follow any further directions given to them by human and animal health authorities.
- Land holders are encouraged to implement a farm biosecurity plan - <https://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/what-we-do/endemic-disease/farm-biosecurity-plan/>.

### **National Disability Insurance Agency**

- The Australian Government has enacted the Coronavirus Emergency Response Plan and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is taking necessary steps to prepare and support participants and providers during the COVID-19 outbreak.

- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants that are concerned about exposure to COVID-19 are able to contact the Department of Health Coronavirus hotline on 1800 020 080 or the National Relay Service on 1300 555 727.
- On Saturday 21 March 2020, the Australian Government announced new measures to support NDIS participants and providers through the COVID-19 pandemic, including:
  - NDIS plans to be extended by up to 24 months, ensuring continuity of support.
  - Increasing capacity of NDIA staff to focus on urgent and required changes to plans.
  - Face to face planning shifted to telephone meetings where possible.
  - Action plan to ensure NDIS participants and their families continue to receive the essential disability supports they need.
  - Proactive outreach to high-risk participants and sharing of data with states and territories to ensure continuity of supports.
  - Financial assistance to providers to support retention of workers including advance payments, 10 per cent COVID-19 loading on some supports and changes to cancellation policies.
  - More flexibility in core and capacity building supports
- All NDIA offices remain open however, social distancing measures will be in place for staff and visitors. Some of our Partner offices are closed. See the NDIS website for latest office operations.
- The NDIS Contact Centre remains the best option for contacting us. Call the Contact Centre on 1800 800 110, Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm (local time). We are also able to service participants and providers through:
  - email – [enquiries@ndis.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@ndis.gov.au)
  - webchat – on the NDIS website.
- We encourage NDIS providers to give participants the essential support they need so they remain safe and have adequate supplies. This means that if you are an NDIS participant, you may need your provider to do some different tasks for you, like visiting the pharmacy to ensure you have an adequate supply of medication, or doing some grocery shopping for you.
- During this period, the priority during this period is to ensure disability supports meet the immediate needs of NDIS participants.
- We expect NDIS Providers to manage the delivery of supports to NDIS participants in line with their obligations under the NDIS Code of Conduct and relevant NDIS Practice Standards, overseen by the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission.

### National Indigenous Australians Agency

- The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) is closely involved with the Government's broader efforts to minimise the health and non-health impacts of COVID-19 on Indigenous Australians, including through membership of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group chaired by the Department of Health and the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations.
- The NIAA is liaising, coordinating and synchronising its efforts with a range of Commonwealth and state and territory government agencies to protect against the serious threat for Indigenous populations, particularly those in remote areas.
- The NIAA is using its regional presence and on-the-ground contacts to assist jurisdictions' development of ongoing responses to COVID-19 and support

communities to develop and implement tailored, culturally appropriate evidence-based responses.

- Remote Travel Restrictions:
  - Some people living in remote communities, such as the elderly and those with existing medical conditions, are particularly at risk of complications from COVID-19.
  - Travel restrictions effective midnight 26 March.
  - Community members advised to stay in their own community and limit unnecessary travel.
  - Enforcement is the responsibility of each jurisdiction.
  - Restrictions will be in place as long as COVID-19 remains a threat to the safety of people living in remote areas.
  - Essential services, including the availability of groceries and medicines, continue to ensure the supply of food and essential items, including pharmaceuticals.
- Community Development Program:
  - From 23 March 2020, NIAA made changes to the Community Development Program (CDP) to help protect Indigenous and non-Indigenous people from the risk of infection by stopping requirements for CDP service providers to deliver face-to-face services.
  - Work for the Dole and other activities delivered in groups will stop.
  - NIAA will continue to pay CDP service providers a reliable ongoing monthly payment while these arrangements are in place to help ensure CDP service providers are able to quickly resume when the COVID crisis is over.
  - Job seekers will still get their payments.
- Students from Boarding Schools:
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who are studying away from home are generally in receipt of ABSTUDY, which provides support for travel, accommodation and tuition. Many of these students are currently returning home.
  - Under ABSTUDY travel requirements, boarding schools and residential facilities are required to develop a 'safe travel plan' for each student returning from the boarding facility to their home community.
  - Boarding providers are required to work with the student, their family, the community and health authorities to ensure the safe return of the student on a case-by-case basis. For some students, this involved earlier travel home to prevent exposure to the virus. For others, it may involve a period of isolation before or after travel, depending on the requirements of the local community.
- Supporting existing service providers:
  - NIAA has ensured appropriate adjustments have been made to allow continuance of funding to service providers that may be impacted by COVID-19 and implemented temporary arrangements for participants in programs funded by the Agency.

## Research

- The University of Queensland (UQ) announced on 21 February that it has created a vaccine candidate for coronavirus which is currently undergoing small-scale testing at CSIRO's biologics production facility in Melbourne.
  - The production of the vaccine will be scaled up to permit the next stage of toxicology studies and testing at UQ. After this, it will go to CSIRO's Australian

Animal Health Laboratory in Geelong for pre-clinical testing for safety and efficacy. Once deemed to be safe and effective, the vaccines will undergo clinical trials and regulatory approvals.

### Personal Protective Equipment and Health consumables

- A key initiative of the Government's response to COVID-19 is to ensure Australia has adequate supplies of medical Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as surgical face masks to reduce further transmission of COVID-19.
- The Government is currently working with local industry to understand capacity and increase local production of PPE including surgical masks and gowns, gloves, goggles and hand sanitiser. The Government has identified a number of Australia manufacturers who are in a position to increase production.
- The Government is also investigating sources of supply from international suppliers.
- More than 10 million masks are approved to be deployed from the National Medical Stockpile as part of the government's response to COVID-19, with approximately 2 million distributed to Primary Health Networks across Australia for provision to people working at GP practices, community pharmacies, and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations.
- 437 million masks are on order. Expected delivery of 30 million masks by 3 April.
- Minister Andrews and Minister Reynolds CSC announced (17 March 2020) that with Government support and the Australian Defence Force, local manufacturer, Med-Con Pty Ltd, had increased its production of surgical masks, and that a Request for Information (RFI) had been released to further understand domestic manufacturing capability and capacity of medical personal protective equipment.
- The Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources has received over 230 responses to the RFI. This is a very strong response from industry so far, and the majority of these companies have been Australian suppliers and manufacturers. The RFI will remain open for responses until 17:00 (AEST) on Tuesday 31 March 2020.
- Minister Andrews has received many offers of assistance from businesses all over Australia, demonstrating the ingenuity and strength of Australian business to support us through these difficult times.
- The Government has been speaking regularly with industry, and State and Territory Governments to understand opportunities and challenges to increasing production and supply of personal protective equipment.
- The highest priority of the Australian Government at this time is to ensure access to masks and other PPE for first responders and respirators for ICUs, and those that have a high risk of contact with individuals with suspected COVID-19.

### Extraordinary G20 Leaders' Summit

- On Thursday 26 March, the Prime Minister joined G20 leaders for an extraordinary virtual Leaders' Summit. Leaders agreed to take all necessary health measures to contain the pandemic and protect the world's citizens. G20 economies are injecting trillions into the global economy to counteract the social, economic and financial impacts of the pandemic. Australia's international support is focused on the Pacific and Timor-Leste.

## 4. IMPACT

### Economic and trade implications for Australia

- The coronavirus is having a significant impact on the Australian economy, coming as it does on the back of the devastating bushfires and the ongoing drought.

- While the tourism and education sectors have felt the immediate effects, faltering global growth and international transport constraints are affecting Australian exporters.
- The economic impact of coronavirus is shifting from service industries to the manufacturing sector. Some Australian retail and manufacturing companies, who are reliant on imported final goods, or components/ingredients and packaging from China, are feeling the effects.
- Both the Reserve Bank and Treasury estimates highlighted the significant direct impact of COVID-19 on economic growth.
- Uncertainty has led to volatility in financial markets. However, Australia's financial markets continue to operate effectively. The Reserve Bank Governor has noted the RBA will ensure the Australian financial system has sufficient liquidity.
- In the short term, the Government is focussed on keeping Australians employed.
- The Australian Government's \$76 million tourism recovery package is assisting businesses impacted by the coronavirus (as well as bushfires).
- The Government is closely monitoring the impact on Australian businesses and trade with China.
- In the short term, reduced flights to China and other markets will likely impact agricultural products.
- Australian exporters have alternative markets that can be accessed for diversion/reshipping of product (albeit at a lower price).

## 5. BACKGROUND

### Epidemiology

- This novel coronavirus was first detected in Wuhan, China around 30 December 2019.
  - This virus belongs to the same family as SARS and MERS.
- Ongoing evidence from China supports previous research that COVID-19 presents as mild disease in the majority of cases with fever and cough being the most commonly reported symptoms.
- Human-to-human transmission of SARS-CoV-2 is via droplets and fomites from an infected person to a close contact. Current evidence does not support airborne or faecal-oral spread as major factors in transmission.

## 6. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

This report is issued under the function of the Australian National Focal Point (NFP). The Australian NFP is in the Office of Health Protection at the Australian Government Department of Health and its activities are supported 24/7 by the National Incident Room (NIR). The Australian NFP is established under the National Health Security Act 2007.

For more information on the event(s) in this report, contact the NFP by email at [health.ops@health.gov.au](mailto:health.ops@health.gov.au) or by phone (24 hours) at +61 (0) 2 6289 3030.