



The Hon. Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 27 March 2020

UPDATE ON CORONAVIRUS MEASURES

Australian governments met today as the National Cabinet to take further action to slow the spread of coronavirus to save lives, and to save livelihoods.

We will be living with this virus for at least six months, so social distancing measures to slow this virus down must be sustainable for at least that long to protect Australian lives, to help Australia to keep functioning and to keep Australians in jobs.

National Cabinet noted the latest statistics and medical advice in relation to COVID-19.

There are more than 3,000 confirmed cases in Australia and sadly 13 people have died. Of the newly reported cases in the last week, the majority have been from New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria.

National Cabinet noted that the vast majority (around 85%) of cases in Australia remain overseas acquired or locally acquired contacts of a confirmed case.

Testing keeps Australians safe. Australia has one of the most rigorous coronavirus testing systems in the world with more than 180,000 tests completed - more than the USA, France or the UK, which have much larger populations. Australia's per capita testing rate is amongst the highest in the world, now surpassing South Korea.

Intensive Care Units (ICU) will be critically important to protect the health of Australians. National Cabinet noted that Commonwealth, states and territories are working on increasing ICU and ventilator capacity - with surge capacity being prepared in the case of outbreaks.

National Cabinet received a comprehensive economic update from Treasury Secretary Dr Steven Kennedy. It noted the Commonwealth and states and territories have implemented major new economic support packages, but that even with these packages it is expected there will still be significant impacts on unemployment and economic activity.

National Cabinet thanked all Australians who are adhering to social distancing and self-isolation arrangements. Hygiene, social isolation and contact tracing are our most important measures to reduce the spread of the virus. We recognise this is a distressing time for Australians and we must stand together to ensure that we support each other.

We will continue to look at further measures as and where necessary to protect Australians. Any further measures to restrict activity may need to be flexible and calibrated to the extent of outbreaks by jurisdiction and the impact on the wellbeing of Australians and economics activity. Our goal is to start businesses and economic again after this health crisis has ended

National Cabinet will meet again on Sunday, 29 March 2020 and consider issues including responses to address. Commercial and residential tenancies and health supply arrangements

Returning Travellers

Substantial numbers of returned travellers and small community outbreaks associated with travellers continue to contribute most of the significant further growth in COVID-19 cases in Australia.

In order to help drive down this concerning number of imported cases, National Cabinet has agreed to take action to further restrict the movement of incoming travellers and to increase compliance checks on travellers who are already undertaking their mandatory self-isolation period at home. This is about reducing the spread of the virus in Australia and saving lives

National Cabinet agreed that:

1. As soon as possible, but no later than 11:59pm Saturday 28 March 2020, all travellers arriving in Australia will be required to undertake their mandatory 14 day self-isolation at designated facilities (for example, a hotel).
 - a. Travellers will be transported directly to designated facilities after appropriate immigration, customs and enhanced health checks.
 - b. Designated facilities will be determined by the relevant state or territory government and will ordinarily be in the city of entry where the traveller has cleared immigration, but facilities in other areas may be used if required.
 - c. These requirements will be implemented under state and territory legislation and will be enforced by state and territory governments, with the support of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and the Australian Border Force (ABF) where necessary.
 - d. The Commonwealth will provide support through the ABF and ADF for these arrangements across Australia, and that states and territories would meet the costs and determine any contributions required for travellers arriving within their jurisdictions.
 - e. Air and maritime crews will be required to continue to undertake the existing precautions they are following where they self-isolate in their accommodation if they enter Australia until their next work voyage.
2. The Australian Defence Force will begin assisting state and territory governments to undertake quarantine compliance checks of those who are required to be in mandatory isolation after returning from overseas.

- a. ADF personnel will bolster local police efforts in visiting the homes and residences of Australians who are in mandatory isolation as directed by state and territory governments and will report to the local police whether the identified individual was at the residence.

ADF assistance will be provided under the Defence Assistance to the Civil Community arrangements.

These new requirements will build on the existing support the Australian Defence Force is providing to the COVID-19 response, including:

- Assistance to the states and territories to support contact tracing efforts.
- Supporting industry with the production of surgical masks.
- Provision of planning and logistics support to Commonwealth, state and territory agencies.
- Provision of personnel to other agencies, including Services Australia.
- Supporting the NT Police with border control operations.
- Assisting states and territories to support the production of food hampers to supply to isolated civilians.

Statement on Schools by the National Cabinet

It is no longer business as usual for our schools, as we adapt to the impact of COVID-19.

We are now in a transition phase until the end of term as schools prepare for a new mode of operation following the school holidays.

For principals, teachers and support staff, the next few months will bring incredible challenges for our education system. We understand they need time to engage in the professional preparation and planning that is required to ensure that every child has access to education during this difficult time in a sustainable and effective manner for the rest of the 2020 school year.

Some states and territories have moved to pupil-free days already and each state and territory will come to their own transition arrangements with their workforce for the rest of this term.

While the medical advice remains that it is safe for children to go to school, to assist with the transition underway in our schools to the new mode of operation we ask that only children of workers for whom no suitable care arrangements are available at home to support their learning, physically attend school. This is vital to ensure that no parent should be forced to choose between their employment and the children's education.

We understand the need for clear, nationally consistent health and safety advice so we have asked the AHPPC to develop guidelines about how staff in schools can protect themselves, manage social distance requirements and cater for those students who are at school. This will include guidelines for staff who work with vulnerable children, particularly those who have additional needs.

For education staff who identify as high risk, vulnerable or are caring for vulnerable family members, you will be supported to work from home.

We will continue to meet with education stakeholders and unions so that we can understand the education challenges for our communities and work constructively towards solutions. That will include the National Cabinet's consideration of the measures needed for early childhood settings and TAFE.

Partnering with private hospitals

National Cabinet agreed to the importance of a strong and viable private hospital sector to bolster Australia's response to COVID-19.

State and territory governments committed to urgently finalise arrangements with private hospitals under the COVID-19 National Partnership Agreement by 29 March 2020, to ensure sufficient and viable capacity exists within the private hospital sector both through the COVID-19 response and on an ongoing basis.

The private hospital system can play an important role in supporting the acute and intensive care needs of infected Australians together with other continuing urgent care needs. The capacity of the private system for non COVID cases and for overflow, particularly from ICU facilities, may be critical to Australia's response.

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