



The Hon. Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister

MEDIA STATEMENT

Monday 30 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 the spread of this virus must be sustainable for at least that long to protect Australian lives.

We need to ensure Australia keeps functioning, to keep Australians in jobs.

The Chief Medical Officer Dr Brendan Murphy provided an update on the measures underway on the latest data and medical advice in relation to coronavirus.

There are more than 4,200 confirmed cases in Australia and sadly 18 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 of cases in Australia are imported from overseas or are 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 238,000 tests completed.

National Cabinet noted the successful implementation of enhanced border measures including the 14-day mandatory quarantine period for international travellers.

The Chief Medical Officer advice is that following the scaled up social distancing measures over the last week, Australia has now achieved significant behavioural change and that the message to “stay at home unless doing limited essential activities” is being heeded.

It is clear the epidemiology curve is beginning to flatten. But it is too early to determine whether such movements will be significant or sustained.

Stronger adherence to social distancing and new quarantine arrangements for returned travellers will take a number of days to show maximum effect.

The biggest single concern remains the evidence of cases where there are no known local links.

The Prime Minister and the Secretary of the Commonwealth Treasury also provided an overview of the economic outlook and the medium and longer term financial risks.

National Cabinet strongly endorsed the Commonwealth's JobKeeper package and urged its support through the Commonwealth Parliament to provide much needed financial support to the Australian economy. They noted that the medium and long-term financial risks were manageable.

National Cabinet agreed to meet again on Friday 3 April 2020.

National Baseline Restrictions

Following agreement of a national baseline for social distancing and business restrictions, National Cabinet agreed to adopt the advice from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) that:

- Supports the long-term nationwide maintenance and enforcement of the restrictions currently in place;
- Local circumstances may prompt states and territories to introduce additional measures for a period to further control community transmission; and
- Local decisions should be on the advice of the local Chief Health Officer informed by the local epidemiology at the time.

The factors influencing such a recommendation include consideration of:

- the overall number of new cases, and particularly the rate of change
- the proportion of locally acquired cases without known links to other cases
- multiple outbreaks in vulnerable populations, including remote Indigenous communities and residential aged care facilities
- capacity of laboratory testing and the health system to respond to current and predicted load.

Clarifications - Vulnerable people in the workplace

National Cabinet endorsed the AHPPC advice on vulnerable people in the workplace, specifically that the following people are, or are likely to be, at higher risk of serious illness if they are infected with the virus:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 50 years and older with one or more chronic medical conditions
- People 65 years and older with chronic medical conditions. Conditions included in the definition of 'chronic medical conditions' will be refined as more evidence emerges.
- People 70 years and older
- People with compromised immune systems (see Department of Health website).

National Cabinet noted that the new AHPPC advice on the higher risk categories for people 65 years and older with chronic conditions had changed based on more up to date medical advice.

In addition, National Cabinet endorsed the AHPPC advice that:

- Where vulnerable workers undertake essential work, a risk assessment must be undertaken. Risk needs to be assessed and mitigated with consideration of the characteristics of the worker,

the workplace and the work. This includes ensuring vulnerable people are redeployed to non-customer based roles where possible. Where risk cannot be appropriately mitigated, employers and employees should consider alternate arrangements to accommodate a workplace absence.

- Special provisions apply to essential workers who are at higher risk of serious illness and, where the risk cannot be sufficiently mitigated, should not work in high risk settings.
- Excluding healthcare settings where appropriate PPE and precautions are adhered to, the AHPPC considers that, given the transmission characteristics of the virus, the following settings are at higher risk of outbreaks of coronavirus - correctional and detention facilities and group residential settings.

The AHPPC advice is that there is limited evidence at this time regarding the risk in pregnant women.

Air and port Crew

Aviation and maritime crew continue to provide an essential service in ensuring that Australians can return home, and that essential movements of critical goods and supplies continue.

National Cabinet re-confirmed that:

- International flight crew are granted a concession from the mandatory 14 day quarantine requirements for individuals arriving in Australia. This is in recognition of their extensive training in infection prevention and control and use of personal protective equipment, whereby the risk from these individuals is considered to be lower than other international travellers. Air crew will continue to practise social distancing, cough etiquette and hand hygiene.
- Maritime crew are granted a concession from the mandatory 14 day quarantine requirements. These crew members already practice self-quarantine on arrival in Australia and between movements in and out of the country. These arrangements should continue to apply, and as with air crew, maritime crew will continue to practise social distancing, cough etiquette and hand hygiene.

Truck Stops

National Cabinet agreed that truck stops can remain open with social distancing and hygiene measures in place, to the satisfaction of local state and territory health authorities.

Quarantine arrangements for vulnerable travellers

National Cabinet agreed that state and territory governments can consider exceptional circumstance exemptions to the requirement to serve the mandatory 14 day self isolation in a hotel or other facility, so as to enable vulnerable or at-risk individuals to self isolate (for 14 days) at home - including for minors or those with medical conditions, such as those returning to Australia from the Medical Treatment Overseas Program.

Early Childhood and Childcare

Previous advice on schools has not changed. National Cabinet agreed to consider arrangements for early childhood and childcare facilities at their next meeting on Friday 3rd April 2020.

Commercial and residential tenancies

National Cabinet agreed to consider advice from Treasurers on commercial and residential tenancies at their next meeting on Friday 3rd April 2020.

[END]