Minister of Health and Aged Care – The Hon Mark Butler MP – media release – Travellers from China required to undertake COVID-19 testing before travel

The Australian Government will introduce pre-departure testing for COVID-19 for people travelling to Australia from the People's Republic of China including the Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macau.

This measure is in response to the significant wave of COVID-19 infections in China and the potential for emerging viral variants in that country.

From 12:01am on Thursday 5 January 2023, travellers will be required to undertake a COVID-19 test within the 48hrs prior to travel and show evidence of a negative test result when travelling to Australia.

While we are no longer in the emergency phase of the pandemic response in Australia, this decision has been made to safeguard Australia from the risk of potential new emerging variants, and in recognition of the rapidly evolving situation in China and uncertainty about emerging viral variants.

In making this decision, I have been briefed extensively by the Chief Medical Officer (CMO). Australia now joins other countries across the world including France, India, Japan, Malaysia, Spain, the Republic of Korea, England and the United States of America in implementing similar measures.

These arrangements are precautionary and temporary and will remain under review based on the health advice and available information.

My department is working with states and territories to monitor the situation in Australia very closely. In addition, the Government continues to work closely with state and territory governments to improve our capacity to detect and rapidly respond to any new emerging variants of concern.

There is no advice to change our current approach to managing this phase of the pandemic in Australia. Fortunately, in Australia we have readily available access to vaccines and treatments, and high underlying population immunity.

Every single person eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine should make an appointment as soon as they are eligible. Staying up to date with vaccinations is one of the simplest actions people can take to help protect themselves from becoming severely unwell from COVID-19. Additionally, anyone who is eligible for oral anti-viral treatments should have a plan to access those if they test positive for COVID-19.

Quotes attributable to Minister Butler:

"The decision to implement these temporary measures has been made out of an abundance of caution, taking into account the dynamic and evolving situation in China and the potential for new variants to emerge in an environment of high transmission."

"Australia is well positioned in its pandemic response. We continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation in Australia and internationally, in collaboration with medical experts. Our absolute priority is keeping our community safe and continuing to be a world leader when it comes to responding to the global COVID-19 pandemic."

"This small but sensible move will help to protect people who are at risk of severe illness and safeguard our healthcare system."