

MINISTERIAL INFORMATION REQUEST

MB20-001000

Date Sent to MO:31/03/2020

MINISTER: Greg Hunt

Issue: MIR - Minister Hunt - COVID-19 Quarantine Act

Response:

- On 21 January 2020, 'human coronavirus with pandemic potential' was added to the [Biosecurity \(Listed Human Diseases\) Determination 2016](#) as a listed human disease. The World Health Organization (WHO) has named the disease [COVID-19](#).
 - o The broad listing (ie not SARS-COV-2 or COVID-19 means the listing is able to operate for future potentially pandemic coronaviruses)
- On 18 March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 outbreak in Australia, the Governor-General declared that a human biosecurity emergency exists. The declaration gives the Minister for Health expansive powers to issue directions and set requirements in order to combat the outbreak. This is the first time these powers under the *Biosecurity Act* have been used.
- For further information see:
https://www.aph.gov.au/About-Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/FlagPost/2020/March/COVID-19_Biosecurity_Emergency_Declaration

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Division/Branch National Incident Response Division

Adviser/DLO Comments:

**Return for
Redraft** ☐

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2019 - 2020 Additional Estimates – March 2020

SB20-000057

Issue: **COVID-19**

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Division/Agency Office of Health Protection

BUDGET

Domestic preparedness and response activities are being coordinated from the Department of Health's National Incident Room, currently within existing resources

KEY POINTS

- The National Incident Room was activated in response to the Novel Coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19) on 22 January 2020. The NIR is co-ordinating actions across the Australian Government and jurisdictional counterparts.
- The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) is meeting daily to provide expert medical advice to all Australian governments, which is informing Australia's response.
- The Communicable Diseases Network Australia (CDNA) is also meeting daily to provide expert advice to the AHPPC.
- Minister Hunt convened meetings of all Health Ministers and their Chief Health Officers on 25 January, 2 and 23 February 2020.
- On 21 January 2020, 'human coronavirus with pandemic potential' was listed as a Listed Human Disease under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*, enabling the use of enhanced border measures.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) International Health Regulations Emergency Committee met on 30 January 2020 and declared the 2019-nCoV (COVID-19) outbreak a "Public Health Emergency of International Concern".
- The Australian Government has assisted over 700 people to depart Wuhan and Japan.
- The Government assisted 170 people to depart Japan who had been passengers aboard the Diamond Princess cruise ship.
 - [Refer questions on the cost of repatriation to DFAT and cost of quarantining to Department of Home Affairs]
- The Government previously assisted 546 people to depart Wuhan in early February including 6 consular officials and 8 Pacific Islander students. All have returned home after their quarantine period.
- On 1 February 2020, the Prime Minister announced strict new travel restrictions on the advice of the AHPPC:
 - Effective 1 February, foreign nationals (excluding permanent residents) who are in mainland China or who have been in mainland China on or after 1 February, will not be allowed to enter Australia until 14 days after they have left, or transited through, mainland China.
 - Restrictions were extended on 20 February, and again on 27 February.

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- On 29 February 2020, the Australian Government announced:
 - the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) raised the level of the travel advisory for Iran from level 3 to level 4, do not travel. For those in Iran, DFAT recommends travellers depart while commercial options are available.
 - foreign nationals who are in Iran on or after 1 March 2020, will not be allowed to enter Australia for 14 days, from the time they have left or transited through Iran.
- Australian citizens, permanent residents, and their immediate family will still be able to enter Australia, as well as airline crews who have been using appropriate personal protective equipment.
- The Government has made available over 850,000 surgical masks to GPs, health care workers and pharmacies via the Primary Health Networks from the National Medical Stockpile.
- A further 500,000 masks are being made available for airport and port staff and arriving passengers plus thermometers at impacted airports.
- The Department has developed and published resources and advice for primary and community health care workers, emergency departments, border workers, people who have to self-isolate, education providers, the aged care sector, and the tourism industry, amongst others.
- Nationally consistent protocols for laboratory testing for COVID-19 and for the public health management of cases have also been implemented.
- A forward view of flights and cruise ships travelling from or through China to Australia has been produced to support planning for the reception of these aircraft and vessels.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Australian Snapshot

Total Australian cases	40, including 1 death <i>(One additional case is yet to be announced)</i>
Recovered from COVID-19 infection	21 cases
Initial cases (n=15)	15 initially reported cases in Australia, all had a direct or indirect travel history to Wuhan, China.
Diamond Princess repatriation cases (n=10)	10 confirmed cases, all repatriated to home states. • 1 death in a repatriated Diamond Princess case in WA
Update – most recent cases (n=13)	• 8 cases are reported have had a direct or indirect travel link to Iran. • 4 cases are reported to have a recent history of overseas travel to countries including Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, South Korea and Japan. • 1 case was reported in a health care worker with no history of overseas travel. Follow-up regarding the likely source of infection is pending.

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Global Snapshot

Total global cases	91 868
Total lives lost	3 131 (188 outside of mainland China, inc. 1 in Australia)
Countries reporting their first case	Morocco and Ukraine reported their first cases.
Total number of countries with reported cases	77 (including mainland China, Hong Kong SAR, Taiwan and Macau)

RECENT MEDIA

US research modelling estimating 96,000 deaths in Australia in a high-severity pandemic:

- McKibbin and Fernando have published the outcomes of modelling for 7 outbreak scenarios using range of assumptions based on historical pandemic information.
- The Australian Government has also conducted modelling to assess and plan for many possible scenarios of the current outbreak and potential pandemic.
- Australia's health emergency response arrangements are flexible and scalable, to respond effectively to any scenario that eventuates.
- Australia is well prepared to respond to and manage a COVID-19 pandemic.
- Our first class health system includes mechanisms for early detection and effective management of cases and contacts, and plans include a range of interventions to minimise transmission and mitigate the impact of the outbreak.
- There are currently insufficient data to determine the severity of COVID-19 outside of Hubei Province, China.

SENSITIVITIES FOR DISCUSSION

- YES – border measures are designed to contain the virus. However, any border measures have impacts on trade (services and goods) and the economy.

Last Cleared By	CELIA STREET
Date Last Cleared	4 March 2020

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