



Australian Government
Department of Health

Chief Medical Officer

The Hon Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Health and Aged Care
PO Box 6022
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister Hunt

s 47E(d)

On 18 March 2020, the Governor-General declared a human biosecurity emergency in relation to the global outbreak of the listed human disease 'human coronavirus with pandemic potential' (COVID-19) under section 475 of the *Biosecurity Act 2015* (the Act). Following that declaration, Professor Murphy as CMO advised that outbound travel posed a risk of importing new cases of COVID-19 into Australia and a risk of further community transmission within Australian territory. In response, you determined requirements to ban overseas travel for Australian citizens and permanent residents, and the inclusion of several exemption categories. I note the Determination has been amended three times since it was first made in March 2020.

COVID-19 continues to represent a severe and immediate threat to human health in Australia. COVID-19 has the ability to cause high levels of morbidity and mortality, and to disrupt the Australian community socially and economically. Australia has recently seen an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases reported with local outbreaks occurring in multiple states and territories. As at 19 July 2021, there have been 32,017 cases of COVID-19, and 914 deaths. COVID-19 continues to pose significant health risks to the Australian community, particularly in the context of the recent instances of community transmission within a number of Australian jurisdictions (NSW, QLD, VIC, SA and NT), the emergence of new Variants of

Interest and Variants of Concern, and the consequential strain placed on the health care and quarantine systems.

The impacts of COVID-19 continue to challenge Australia, with local outbreaks, community transmission, hotel quarantine transmission, ever-changing high risk countries and countries of acquisition, and Australia's low vaccination rate and staged roll out being factors for consideration. s 47C, s 47E(d)

and
continues to be an important mechanism for controlling the spread of COVID-19 in the Australian community.

Each new case identified in quarantine increases the risk of leakage into the Australian community through transmission to quarantine workers or other quarantined returnees, and subsequently into the Australian community more broadly. Queensland and the Northern Territory have recently seen COVID-19 introduced into Australia by travellers arriving from overseas. These outbreaks have resulted in significant impacts on, and disruptions to, the community through community transmission of COVID-19 and subsequent control measures such as restrictions on domestic travel, pausing of quarantine-free travel with New Zealand, and localised lockdowns. Outbreaks in the Northern Territory potentially have significant consequences for the vulnerable remote communities. s 47C, s 47E(d)

The number and proportion of cases among international arrivals is influenced by travel patterns of returning Australians, as well as by the prevalence of COVID-19 in the countries from which people are arriving. Australia's ability to influence outbound travel via emergency measures is in keeping with the evolving global situation whilst the spread and volume of COVID-19 cases continues to impact the

world
s 47C, s 47E(d)

I acknowledge that removing the automatic exemption for persons ordinarily resident outside of Australia will result in those persons having to apply for an 'exceptional circumstances' exemption to leave at the discretion of the Australian Border Force. I note that under the proposed transition period, persons falling into this cohort will have until 31 July 2021 to return to their ordinary place of residence under the automatic exemption, before the automatic exemption is repealed.

s 47C, s 47E(d)

s 47C, s 47E(d)

I remain satisfied that the restrictions on outgoing travel by Australian citizens and permanent residents, including the proposed amendment, are necessary to continue to prevent or control the further entry, emergence, establishment and spread of COVID-19 within Australia and Australian territory.

I recommend that you, in your capacity as Minister for Health and Aged Care, consider amending the Determination as proposed.

Yours sincerely



Professor Paul Kelly
Chief Medical Officer

21 July 2021