

01 April 2020

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Re: COVID-19 Update

COVID-19 has continued to increase in case numbers around the world.

The WHO Situation Report 71 (as at 10:00 CET 31 March 2020), has 180 countries/territories (including China) with confirmed cases. Total reported cases globally now sits at 750,890 confirmed cases of COVID-19. Overall case fatality rate remains at approximately 4.8% (based on Situation report 71 figures), with total global reported deaths since December 2019 now sitting at 36,405. Internationally two major regions of ongoing focus are the European Region (423,946 cases, with 26,694 deaths, with a fatality rate of 6.3%) and the Region of the Americas with a growing case rate (163,014 cases, with 2836 deaths, with a fatality rate of 1.7%). Three countries have now exceeded the total case number reported by China - the United States of America (140,640), Italy (101,739) and Spain (85,195).

As at 15:00 1<sup>st</sup> of April, Australia has 4,860 confirmed cases of COVID-19, with twenty fatalities recorded.

Of these cases:

|                              |       |
|------------------------------|-------|
| Australian Capital Territory | 84    |
| New South Wales              | 2,182 |
| Northern Territory           | 18    |
| Queensland                   | 781   |
| South Australia              | 367   |
| Tasmania                     | 68    |
| Victoria                     | 968   |
| Western Australia            | 392   |

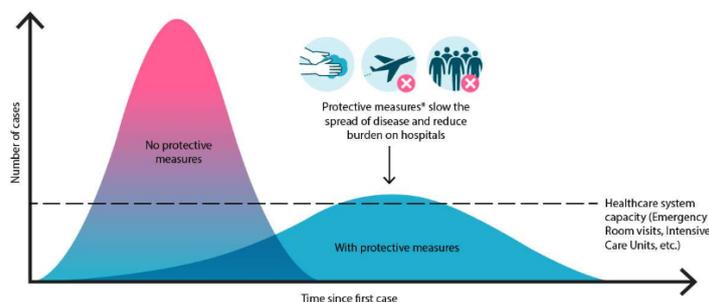
More than 256,000 tests have been undertaken in Australia with one of the highest rates of testing globally.

The government has continued to implement a range of measures that have tightened previous announcements aimed at flattening the curve – *slow the spread and free up the bed*.

Flattening the curve refers to the speed at which the spread of disease occurs. By flattening the curve in terms of numbers of cases occurring in a short period of time it reduces the impact on health services for those requiring critical care. It is important to note that the idea of flattening the curve does not mean that overall numbers may be reduced, just that the surge affecting health care services is reduced.

## Flatten the curve

How to lower and delay the coronavirus pandemic peak



\*Protective measures include washing hands, working from home, limiting mass gatherings, minimising travel, etc.

Indications are that progress has been made with the social distancing restrictions that have been put in place that there is some initially flattening of the curve occurring. Whilst these initial indications are encouraging it is important to remember that the restrictions currently in place can be expected to remain for an ongoing period of time, particularly as we move into the traditional influenza season.

Recent media reporting has focused on the introduction of rapid point of care test kits to the Australian market. A number of these have undergone review with the Therapeutic Goods Administration of Australia for use with tight restrictions in place on who may use the testing (ie, they are only able for administration by a doctor or a registered nurse under instruction by a doctor). The kits currently cleared by the TGA are anti-body testing kits which are not for acute diagnosis. It is unclear at this point as to how they will be incorporated in to the clinical protocols in place for testing, with further updates on this expected from the public health units once they are available in country.

Please find to follow information regarding ongoing workplace planning. This advice is based on the most up-to-date recommendations from a number of sources including WHO, Australian Government Department of Health, Queensland Health and the Royal Australian College of Practitioners.

### ***Workplace Management***

Ongoing workplace management, preparation and review of procedures aimed at managing and reducing the impact of COVID-19 within business is recommended in line with the previous advice.

As recently outlined by the Australian Government further restrictions are now in place in relation to non-essential gatherings both indoors and outdoors. This is now limited to two people (beyond those from within your family unit) indoors and outdoors. There are specific restrictions remaining in place in relation to weddings (5 including celebrants) and funerals (10).

Schools around Australia remain open to allow essential workers to continue to attend school if required to allow parents to continue to work. Attendances at most schools around Australia dropped to at or below 5 percent during the last week of the current school term, with the introduction of "home learning" to support ongoing education.

Workplaces continue to be afforded ongoing allowances in regards to the "2 people" limits. Where possible social distancing rules around 1.5 metres and 1 person for every 4 square metres should be adhered to wherever practicable. A range of deemed non-essential businesses have been forced to close, with those affected including:

- Auction houses
- Real estate auctions and open house inspections
- Outdoor and indoor markets (excluding food markets and farmers markets)
- Cafes, restaurants, fast-food outlets, food courts (these businesses may provide takeaway foods only)
- Mess halls or canteens that are reasonably necessary for the normal business of the facility may continue to provide food and drink with social distancing observed (such as limited access to meal areas, limited seating which is spaced out around the mess hall and guidance for staff as to where they should stand when lining up for service)
- Beauty therapy, waxing and nail salons and tattoo parlours.
- Spas and massage parlours
- Registered and licensed clubs or licensed premises in hotels (bottle shops and off licence premises attached to venues may continue to operate with social distancing observed).
- Cinemas and nightclubs
- Casinos or other gambling venues.
- Concert venues, theatres, arenas, auditoriums and stadiums
- Theme parks, amusement parks and arcades.
- Community and recreation centres
- Boot camps and personal training (limited to 2 people only, including the personal trainer).
- Social sporting-based activities (limited to 2 people with social distancing observed)
- Swimming pools
- Public playgrounds, skate parks, bike tracks and outside gyms
- Hostels, bed and breakfasts, backpackers and boarding houses (may continue to operate for permanent residents, temporary residents and workers of the facility, with social distancing observed)

- Caravan and camping parks (excluding where people live permanently in caravan parks or are staying in caravan parks as interim abodes where their primary residence is not available. They may also continue to operate for essential workers such as health practitioners or other persons providing essential services for example, emergency services or infrastructure projects, again with social distancing observed).
- Campgrounds
- Zoos and wildlife centres
- Galleries, museums, historic sites, libraries
- Community centres (excluding those in remote communities if they are essential for distributing health or medical information or education to the community with social distancing observed)
- Community facilities such as halls, clubs, RSLs, PCYCs (as above, and in addition if they provide formal out of school hours care with social distancing observed).
- Places of worship

It is likely that some or all of the above closures could continue for the next 3-6 months.

Restrictions have also been put in place which limit access to aged care facilities. Those aged over 70 are encouraged to isolate at home wherever possible with limited movement away from the house.

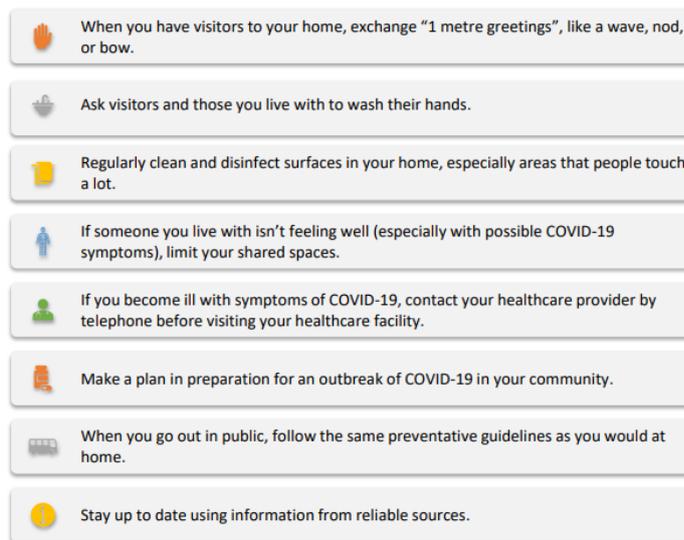
A number of states and territories around Australia have also limited access to non-residents, with varying exemptions from state to state that apply to those such as interstate workers on FIFO resources projects and health practitioners. A number of states have also imposed mandatory 14 day quarantine periods for visitors outside of stipulated exemptions, with some such as Queensland moving to prevent holidaymakers from crossing the border.

The government has also made recommendations in relation to other social distancing measures, these include:

- Limit leaving the house to undertake activities such as:
  - visits to shops to only purchase essential supplies
  - Leaving the house to undertake work where this work cannot be undertaken from home
  - Attending medical or legal appointments
  - Taking children to/from school
  - Compassionate grounds
- Restricting the number of people at a private residence to 10 (unless there are more than 10 people that actively reside in the house)
- Where leaving the house to undertake exercise, this is to be limited to either your immediate family or you and one other person if they are not a part of your immediate family
- Stop shaking hands
- Maintain a social distance of 1.5metres (particularly with those that maybe unwell)
- Avoid queuing, handholding and assemblies
- Clean and disinfect shared high-touch surfaces regularly
- Utilise technology wherever possible to undertake meetings rather than face-to-face

Personnel should also be encouraged to:

- Clean their hands regularly with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rubs
- Minimise touching of shared surfaces, particularly in public places
- If you need to – sneeze or cough into your elbow or a clean tissue (and dispose of the tissue in the bin immediately)
- Avoid touching your face, nose and mouth
- Stay home if you are unwell



We have developed the accompanying triage flowchart to assess any staff who may be of concern. Please note that this is based on the current advice as available from the Australian Government Department of Health and Queensland Health. This advice is subject to ongoing review and change and the flowchart will be updated as this advice changes. The flowchart has been updated to also capture the increasing amount of local transmission which is occurring.

### ***Separating Fact from Fiction***

The WHO have continued to provide a series of mythbusters to help dispel a number of concerns within the broader community. These can be found on the WHO website at the following link:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters>

### ***International Travel***

The Australian Government has again amended their travel advice and border restrictions. As of 11:59pm 28<sup>th</sup> March all returning travelers will be placed in mandatory isolation in the city of their arrival, with hotel facilities being used in capital cities around Australia to house these returning travelers. From 9:00pm AEDT 20 March, only Australian citizens, residents and immediate family members can travel to Australia. Australia's borders remain closed to all other travelers (with some exemptions available via application to the Australian Government Home Affairs Department.

The above restrictions are in place until further notice.

The recommendation in regards to overseas travel to all locations by The Australian Government is "do not travel" to all overseas locations. A large number of airline carriers around the world (including Qantas and Virgin) have announced suspensions of all/most/some of their international routes following the closure of a growing number of borders to foreigners around the world.

### ***Managing Staff***

Staff should be encouraged to continue to maintain good hygiene practices at all times.

For any staff who may present to the workplace ill, current symptoms to watch out for include:

- Fever
- A cough
- Sore throat
- Fatigue
- Shortness of Breath

Please refer to the accompanying flowchart with regards to managing any staff within the workplace that may present with symptoms or who have recently travelled. Staff should be managed and reviewed against the criteria as outlined by Australian Government Department of Health. Where staff are referred out for further testing **it is important that they communicate prior to arrival what the situation is so as they can be managed appropriately on arrival.**

Those most at risk of serious infection are:

- People with compromised immune systems (*eg. Cancer patients*)
- Elderly people
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- People with a diagnosed chronic medical condition
- Very young children and babies (*please note at this stage the risk to children and babies and the role they may play in transmission is not clear*)
- People in group residential settings
- People in detention facilities

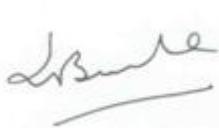
We would recommend employers encourage their staff to complete the Australian Government Infection Control training course to assist in broadening understanding of understanding of the virus, how to minimize the spread and the impact of good hygiene practices. The course can be found at: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/covid-19-infection-control-training> whilst the course is primarily aimed at care workers, we believe that there is value in ensuring widespread understanding of the content. The content is not of a clinical level and is appropriate for all levels of business. There is a high level of demand for the course which takes 30 minutes to complete and we encourage patience in the registration and access process.

Employers are encouraged to develop and implement a range of procedures aimed at reducing the risks associated with the spread of COVID-19, including travel arrangements, accommodation and messing facilities, and management of work groups to limit business interruption in the event of an employee being diagnosed with COVID-19.

As the situation is changing on a continual basis it is important to review all travel advice from the Australian Government and maintain awareness of any changes in advice from both the federal and state health departments.

I trust the forgoing is of assistance. If you require any further information in regards to this issue, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards,



Nicholas Burke  
Occupational Physician

Previously provided links to resource documents.

WHO published the following advice piece in relation to “Getting your workplace ready for COVID-19”

[https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=359a81e7\\_4](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=359a81e7_4)

Australian Government advice for employers.

[https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/02/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-employers\\_1.pdf](https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/02/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-employers_1.pdf)

Workplace information posters

<https://www.who.int/images/default-source/health-topics/coronavirus/social-media-squares/blue-4.png>

<https://www.who.int/images/default-source/health-topics/coronavirus/social-media-squares/blue-1.png>

<https://www.who.int/images/default-source/health-topics/coronavirus/social-media-squares/blue-3.png>

<https://www.who.int/images/default-source/health-topics/coronavirus/social-media-squares/blue-2.png>

The WHO have also published a series of information posters to provide advice on staying healthy whilst travelling for those that can't avoid it.

<https://www.who.int/images/default-source/health-topics/coronavirus/social-media-squares/1.png>

<https://www.who.int/images/default-source/health-topics/coronavirus/social-media-squares/2.png>

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