



HOME AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

Senate Select Committee COVID 19 – Briefing Index

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**Home Affairs Portfolio
Department of Home Affairs
Senate Select Committee on COVID 19**

KEY BRIEF

Topic: Managing the Return of Australians – Pre, at and post border

Responsible Deputy: Mr Marc Ablong PSM, National Resilience and Cyber Security Group

Handling note:

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is responsible for consular support; the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment is responsible for biosecurity and human biosecurity border measures; the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications is responsible for the management of passenger caps and liaison with airlines; the Department of Health is responsible for the provision of health advice and policy for human biosecurity at international borders, as well as liaison with the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee; The Australian Border Force is responsible for border clearance and facilitation at airports; States and Territories are responsible for health screening, quarantining and marshalling return travellers into quarantine.

*There has been significant media reporting on the challenges for Australians to return home given States and Territories quarantine capacity and international arrival caps (see example article at **Attachment A**).*

Related briefs:

Travel Exemptions: SB20-000475

Australia New Zealand Travel Bubble: SB20-000479

Powers – Biosecurity Act, Privacy Act and other Commonwealth use of powers: SB20-000596

Engagement with Qantas and Other Airlines: SB20-000920

Constitutional basis for travel bans and passenger caps: SB20-000949

Key Statistics

- Since the coronavirus global pandemic was declared on 11 March 2020, 373,116 Australian citizens and 52,496 permanent residents have returned from overseas (as at 22 September 2020)¹.
 - Of the total returns, the Australian Border Force and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade have directly assisted 27,300 individuals on more than 350 flights (as at 22 September 2020)².

Statistics provided by:

¹ Operational Performance Management, Strategic Border Command, Australian Border Force

² Border Patrol and Coordination Command, Australian Border Force

Released by Department of Home Affairs
under the Freedom of Information Act 1982

- According to reporting by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, at 22 September 2020 there were over 26,800³ Australians overseas who had registered an interest to return to Australia.

Key Talking Points

- The Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has focused on reducing the spread of the virus in Australia and saving lives.
- Our approach to managing our international borders is guided by health advice, including: the implementation of physical distancing, health screening and other biosecurity measures at our airports; 14-day mandatory quarantine at a State or Territory-run facility for international arrivals; and restrictions on inbound and outbound travel.
- Under the National Coordination Mechanism, a weekly "Managing Returns to Australia Working Group", chaired by the Australian Border Force, is convened with State and Territory agencies to support the safe return of Australian citizens and permanent residents, manage and maximise use of passenger caps, and coordinate and de-conflict repatriation efforts as well as discuss emerging issues.

Pre-border

- The Australian Government has prioritised the return of Australian citizens and permanent residents, who are primarily returning to Australia on scheduled commercial airline flights.
- To maintain the integrity of Australia's quarantine and health systems and protect the Australian community, caps were implemented in a staged manner at the request of States and Territories and State and Territory caps were agreed by National Cabinet on 10 July.
 - The caps are implemented under legislation administered by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications.
- The caps were set up to 3,975 passengers per week, comprised of:
 - **Sydney** (350 per day equating to 2,450 passengers per week), **Perth** (525 per week), **Brisbane** (500 per week), **Adelaide** (500 per week), **Melbourne and Hobart** are not receiving any international flights and in **Canberra and Darwin**, passenger limits on each flight are managed on a case-by-case basis.

³ Consular Coordination and Performance Section, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

- On 18 September 2020, the Prime Minister announced that the National Cabinet agreed to increase the caps on international arrivals in a staged manner resulting in an additional 1,600 passenger arrivals per week, up to 5,575 per week, from the week of 12 October 2020. This is comprised of:
 - **Sydney** (2,950 passengers per week), **Brisbane** (1,000 per week), **Perth** (1,025 per week), **Adelaide** (600 per week), **Melbourne** is not receiving flights and the smaller States and Territories have agreed to assist with any special commercial flights which would also increase overall capacity.
- Biosecurity checks, including mandatory pre-arrival reporting of sick passengers and crew for international vessels and flights, is the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment in coordination with State and Territory health authorities.

At border

- The Australian Border Force is the lead Home Affairs Portfolio operational agency supporting the Australian Government's repatriation efforts and facilitates international arrivals at the border.
- Since 28 March 2020, all travellers arriving in Australia (with limited exceptions such as aviation crew, unaccompanied minors, transit passengers and diplomats) have been subject to the mandatory quarantine period of 14 days, as recommended by Australia's expert health authorities, and managed by the State and Territory Governments under their jurisdictional arrangements.
- Travellers boarding flights destined for Australia are advised of the mandatory quarantine requirements at check-in, during the flight, and upon arrival in Australia.
- Prior to travellers and crew disembarking the aircraft, biosecurity officers from the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment play the Australian Government COVID-19 health message and all travellers receive the 'COVID-19 Information for International Travellers' factsheet.
- All arriving travellers and crew undergo mandatory enhanced health screening at the border by health professionals from State and Territory Departments of Health. This is facilitated by Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment and the Australian Border Force. Where no health professionals are present, biosecurity officers from the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment undertake the border health screening.

Post-border

- Onward marshalling and transfer to quarantine facilities for the mandatory 14-day hotel quarantine is managed by State and Territory officials. Quarantine arrangements (including the establishment of user-pays arrangements for mandatory quarantine) are also the responsibility of individual State and Territory governments.

“If asked”

What is Home Affairs’ plan to bring home Australians overseas?

- Home Affairs led a whole of government effort to develop the Managing Returns Framework which was agreed by Government to repatriate as many Australians as possible while not overwhelming the State and Territory quarantine and health systems.
 - At 22 September 2020, 373,116 Australian citizens and 52,496 permanent residents have returned home.
 - Together with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and relevant agencies, returns of 27,300 individuals on more than 350 flights have been facilitated (as at 22 September 2020).
- Under the National Coordination Mechanism construct, Home Affairs and the Australian Border Force have led Deputy Secretary/Deputy Commissioner level discussions with State and Territory agencies and Commonwealth agencies, including the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment; the Department of Health; and the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Communications to manage international arrival flows, maximise caps, and de-conflict repatriation efforts.
- The ABF Commissioner can talk to the operational elements of facilitating the entry of returning international travellers.

Why isn’t the Department of Home Affairs bringing stranded Australians back like they did for those evacuated from Wuhan, and the Diamond Princess Cruise Ship?

- The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade coordinates and leads the evacuation of Australian citizens from overseas in an emergency situation should circumstances require.
- Any decision to evacuate Australians offshore to Australia would need to consider the accommodation, quarantine and health capacity.

What is the role of Home Affairs in managing international arrivals?

- Through the stand-up of the National Coordination Mechanism process we have led a Whole of Government coordinated response to the crisis.
 - Under this mechanism we have held Deputy Secretary/Deputy Commissioner meetings with States and Territories, which are supported by regular SES Band One Working Group operational meetings with the States and Territories to manage flows, maximise caps, and de-conflict repatriation efforts.
- Specific questions about consular support to Australians offshore, including support provided to vulnerable Australians, should be directed to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

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Why is the Department of Home Affairs limiting the number of passengers on flights?

- The States and Territories have requested the international arrival caps based on their quarantine and health capacity and these caps have been agreed by National Cabinet.
- The number of passengers approved on individual airline flights varies depending on how many airlines are operating on that day, and subject to the total cap on international passenger arrivals. This process is managed by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport Regional Development and Communications.
- The Department of Home Affairs and the Australian Border Force have assisted in the management of caps through the National Coordination Mechanism, working across jurisdictions to discuss and agree flights, passenger numbers, place of residence and quarantine arrangements. This collaboration has assisted to maximise return opportunities for Australians, while effectively managing associated risks with returning international travellers.

What are you doing to enable more people to travel?

- Home Affairs in consultation with the Australian Border Force and relevant government agencies and Industry are actively undertaking preparations for the resumption of flights when health conditions allow.
- We have developed a National Implementation Plan agreed by Government that outlines measures to enable the separation of quarantine free, low-risk travellers through “green lanes” from those entering from higher risk countries using “red lanes”.
- Planning is initially focussed on New Zealand being the first country in which a “green lane” will be established. Officials-level negotiations on the Travel Zone arrangement are well advanced. The commencement of quarantine-free travel from New Zealand (once the Chief Medical Officer assesses it is safe) will free up quarantine places for those returning from other parts of the world, and will greatly assist the return of Australians.

What agency holds responsibility for health checks, quarantine and similar matters, as they apply to Australians returning home?

- Home Affairs together with the Australian Border Force is responsible for facilitating the movement of people, products and goods across the border in close consultation with the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment and the State and Territory Health authorities.
- Specific questions about biosecurity should be should be directed to the Department of Health for the legislative and the Department of Agriculture for operational effect.

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Consultation

Prime Minister and Cabinet; Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment; Department of Health; Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications; the Australian Border Force (ABF Government Relations, Border Patrol and Coordination Command and Strategic Border Command); Data Division; Legal Group; Border Measures.

Responsible Officer Marc Ablong PSM Deputy Secretary National Resilience and Cyber Security §47E(d)	Contact Officer Andrew Rose A/g First Assistant Secretary International Policy Division §47E(d)
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Department of Home Affairs
Select Committee on COVID-19
Questions on Notice

BRIEF

Questions on Notice

Key Statistics

The Home Affairs portfolio received 350 spoken and written questions on notice from the Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 since the Committee was established on 8 April 2020.

Of the 350 QoNs received, 72 did not fall within the terms of reference of the inquiry.

Terms of Reference

On 8 April 2020 the Senate established the Select Committee on COVID-19 and referred the following matters to it for inquiry and report on or before 30 June 2022:

- a. the Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic; and*
- b. any related matters.*

In consultation with the Minister for Home Affairs' Chief of Staff the Department advised the Committee Secretariat that the Department would not be answering these questions.

- 68 of these questions were asked by Senator Keneally.
- Four were asked by Senator Sheldon.

Of the 237 questions already answered by the portfolio, eight were not answered within the timeframe set by the Committee. These eight were answered the following working day.

The Department is currently drafting 38 questions on notice received from Senator McKim, these are due to the Committee on Friday 25 September 2020.

The Australian Federal Police are currently drafting three questions on notice from Senator Keneally, these are due to the Committee on Friday 2 October 2020.

Consultation

External agencies consulted: No

Attachments

Attachment A: List of questions not answered as they did not fall within the terms of reference

Responsible Officer	Contact Officer
<p data-bbox="193 331 786 405">Emily Grant, Assistant Secretary, Ministerial and Parliamentary Branch</p> <p data-bbox="193 421 483 528">s47E(d)</p>	<p data-bbox="831 331 1409 405">s47E(c), Director, Parliamentary Section</p> <p data-bbox="831 421 1126 528">s47E(d)</p>

Questions on notice from Senator Keneally to the Department of Home Affairs (including Australian Border Force)

Question 1:

For each of the following months, how many people have entered Australia's domestic immigration detention network for the purposes of deportation via a Section 501 visa cancellation. For each month, please provide a breakdown as to whether the detainee was transferred directly from prison, from the community, or elsewhere (please provide whatever categories available).

- Jan 2019
- Feb 2019
- Mar 2019
- Apr 2019
- May 2019
- Jun 2019
- Jul 2019
- Aug 2019
- Sep 2019
- Oct 2019
- Nov 2019
- Dec 2019
- Jan 2020
- Feb 2020
- Mar 2020
- Apr 2020
- May 2020
- Jun 2020

Question 2:

For each of the following months, how many people have entered Australia's domestic immigration detention network for the purposes of deportation via a Section 116(l)(e) visa cancellation. For each month, please provide a breakdown as to whether the detainee was transferred directly from prison, from the community, or elsewhere (please provide whatever categories available).

- Jan 2019
- Feb 2019
- Mar 2019

- Apr 2019
- May 2019
- Jun 2019
- Jul 2019
- Aug 2019
- Sep 2019
- Oct 2019
- Nov 2019
- Dec 2019
- Jan 2020
- Feb 2020
- Mar 2020
- Apr 2020
- May 2020
- June 2020

Questions on notice from Senator Keneally to the Department of Home Affairs (including Australian Border Force)

Questions for the Department of Home Affairs (including Australian Border Force)

Please provide the following statistics up to the end of July 2020. Where end-July data is not available, please provide the most current data, and the date for which this data was accurate for:

1. The current number of people who have overstayed their visa in Australia.
2. The number of people who are waiting for citizenship and are:
 - a. Waiting for their citizenship application to be processed (but not including those people who are only waiting for their citizenship ceremony)
 - b. Waiting for their citizenship ceremony
3. The number of people who:
 - a. Became citizens via conferral in the past month
 - b. Have become citizens via conferral year-to-date
 - c. Acquired citizenship in the past month
 - d. Acquired citizenship year-to-date
4. The current average wait time for an individual from application to citizenship ceremony.
5. The number of people who are waiting for their partner visa to be processed.
6. The current average wait time for a partner visa application to be processed.
7. The number of children who are waiting for their child visa to be processed.
8. The current average wait time for a child visa application to be processed.
9. In relation to Safe Haven Enterprise Visas:
 - a. How many people in Australia currently hold a SHEV?
 - b. How many new applications were submitted in the past month?
 - c. How many applications are currently in progress?
 - d. How many SHEVs have been granted in the past month?
 - e. The current average wait time for a SHEV to be processed
10. In relation to Temporary Protection Visas:
 - a. How many people in Australia currently hold a TPV?
 - b. How many new applications were submitted in the past month?
 - c. How many applications are currently in progress?
 - d. How many TPVs have been granted in the past month?
 - e. The current average wait time for a TPV to be processed
11. In relation to the Permanent Migration Program:
 - a. Year to date, how many visas have been granted through the program?
 - i. What is the state / territory that these migrants intend to settle?
 - ii. Please provide this data split by skilled, family, child and special eligibility.
 - b. In the past month, how many visas have been granted through the program?
 - i. Please provide this data split by skilled, family, child and special eligibility.

- ii. What is the intended state / territory that these migrants intend to settle?
- 12. In relation to temporary visas:
 - a. Year to date, how many visas have been granted through the program?
 - i. What is the state / territory that these migrants intend to settle?
 - ii. Please provide this data split by visa subcategory.
 - b. In the past month, how many visas have been granted through the program?
 - i. What is the intended state / territory that these migrants intend to settle?
 - ii. Please provide this data split by visa subcategory.
- 13. In relation to the Offshore Processing Cohort:
 - a. How many people are currently in PNG?
 - b. How many people are currently in Nauru?
 - c. How many people are currently in Australia for medical reasons after being brought here by the Australian Government?
 - i. What is the current residency arrangements for these individuals? i.e. community detention, APODs, detention centre
 - d. How many people are currently in Australia for medical reasons after being brought to Australia via the Medevac legislation?
 - e. In total, how many people from the Offshore Processing Cohort have been approved for resettlement in the United States?
 - i. How many people have been resettled in the United States?
 - f. In total, how many people from the Offshore Processing Cohort have been approved for resettlement in a country other than the United States?
 - i. Please provide a breakdown by country and number of people that have been resettle.
- 14. What is the total number of people in Australia with a temporary visa?
 - a. Please provide a breakdown by the following categories:
 - i. Bridging visa (please specify each BV category)
 - ii. Visitor
 - iii. Student
 - iv. Temporary resident (skilled)
 - v. Temporary resident (other)
 - vi. Working holiday maker
 - vii. Special category (New Zealand)
 - viii. Other temporary
 - ix. Maritime crew and transit
- 15. In relation to irregular maritime arrivals where the applications are still being processed:
 - a. How many applications are still being processed by the Department?
 - b. How many applications are being considered by the AAT / Courts?
- 16. What is the total number of people in Australia with a temporary visa?
- 17. What is the total number of people granted entry into Australia through the Humanitarian program:
 - a. In the past month?
 - b. Year to date?
 - c. Please provide a breakdown by visa subclass
- 18. How many community support visas have been granted:
 - a. In the past month?

- b. Year to date?
- 19. How many vulnerable women/child visas have been granted:
 - a. In the past month?
 - b. Year to date?
- 20. How many character test visa cancellations (s501) have taken place:
 - a. In the past month?
 - b. Year to date?
- 21. How many visa cancellations have been cancelled through s116:
 - a. In the past month?
 - b. Year to date?
- 22. Over the past month, how many:
 - a. Visas have been cancelled?
 - b. Unlawful non-citizens have been located?
 - c. Visa holders in employment without work right have been located?
 - d. People have been removed from onshore detention and deported?
 - e. Illegal foreign fishing vessels have been apprehended
- 23. Year-to-date, how many:
 - a. Visas have been cancelled?
 - b. Unlawful non-citizens have been located?
 - c. Illegal workers have been located?
 - d. People have been removed from onshore detention?
 - e. Illegal foreign fishing vessels have been apprehended?
- 24. How many people are currently in Australia's domestic detention centre network in total?
 - a. Please provide a breakdown by:
 - i. Detention Centres
 - ii. APODs
 - iii. Community Detention
- 25. In relation to the ABF Marine Unit,
 - a. How many patrol days (total fleet) have been completed in the past month?
 - i. Please provide a breakdown by vessel type.
 - b. How many patrol days have been completed year-to-date?
 - i. Please provide a breakdown by vessel type and month.
 - c. What vessels were in port for more than seven days during the past month?
 - i. Please provide the name of the vessel, the reason for it being in port, and the total number of days in port?
 - ii. If maintenance, please provide a brief description of the maintenance required and whether this is routine or out of cycle.
- 26. In relation to air surveillance of our borders:
 - a. How many square nautical miles of air coverage have been completed in the past month?
 - i. Please provide a breakdown by asset class.
 - b. How many hours of air coverage have been completed in the past month?
 - i. Please provide a breakdown by asset class.
 - c. How many square nautical miles of air coverage have been completed year-to-date?
 - i. Please provide a breakdown by asset class.

- d. How many hours of air coverage have been completed year-to-date?
 - i. Please provide a breakdown by asset class.
- e. How many days during the past month in total were air surveillance assets operational?
 - i. Did this meet the Department's objectives? If not, why not, please specify the reason.
- f. How many days in total and year-to-date were air surveillance non-operational?
 - i. Please provide a monthly breakdown.
- 27. In relation to customs duty, passenger movement charges & import processing charges:
 - a. How much has been collected over the past month?
 - b. How much has been collected year-to-date?
- 28. In relation to visa application charges:
 - a. How much has been collected over the past month?
 - b. How much has been collected year-to-date?
- 29. What proportion of the Australian population are:
 - a. First generation migrants
 - b. Second generation migrants
- 30. What proportion of Australian citizens are born overseas? Please provide the most recent estimation the Department uses, and its source and date.
- 31. What was the total budget allocation for the Home Affairs portfolio, including all agencies and the Department, in 2019-20?
 - a. Please provide a breakdown by agency.
- 32. What was the total projected number of employees in the Home Affairs portfolio, including all agencies and the Department, in 2019-20?
 - a. Please provide a breakdown by agency.

In addition, please provide answers to the following questions:

- 1. What proportion of the Australian population are:
 - a. First generation migrants
 - b. Second generation migrants
- 2. What proportion of Australian citizens are born overseas? Please provide the most recent estimation the Department uses, and its source and date.
- 3. What was the total budget allocation for the Home Affairs portfolio, including all agencies and the Department, in 2019-20?
 - a. Please provide a breakdown by agency.
- 4. What was the total projected number of employees in the Home Affairs portfolio, including all agencies and the Department, in 2019-20?
 - a. Please provide a breakdown by agency.
- 5. In the 2019 INLSM Report to AG on Citizenship Loss Provisions, the INSLM reported that, more than 75 people have been convicted of terrorist offences in Australia, with 30 more before the courts, 93 people in total have been charged as a result of 41 CT operations since the national terrorism threat level was raised to 'probable' (12 September 2014).
 - a. Can the Department please provide statistics for:
 - i. The number of people charged with terrorism offences (to include foreign incursions offences) in Australia since 12 September 2014. Please provide a breakdown by state.

- ii. The number of people convicted of terrorist offences in Australia (to include foreign incursions offences). Please provide a breakdown by state.
- iii. The number of people subject to control orders or continuing detention orders post-release. Please also include the number of applications made by authorities for such orders, even if ultimately unsuccessful.

How many CT operations have been conducted since 12 September 2014? And, how many people in total have been charged as a direct result of those operations?

Question 1:

In relation to the Future Maritime Surveillance Capability (FMSC), previously via Question on Notice No. 1163 & 1164, the Department has advised that:

- Qu 2 - A New Policy Proposal was not prepared in the lead up to the launch of the FMSC project in October 2018. Activities undertaken by the Department in the lead up to the launch were funded within the existing departmental budget. The total cost of the absorbed activities were \$2,318,694.
- Qu 3 - Departmental officials including project team members incurred \$11,153 of costs for travel to the announcement. The Department's Ministerial cost centre did not incur costs for travel to the Ministerial announcement.
- Qu 4 - From 1 November 2018 until 31 December 2019 (latest available figures as at 24 January 2020), the Department incurred costs of \$1,757,021 for the FMSC project.

Have any of these costs changed, since these answers were provided? If so, why have the costs changed? Please provide a detailed explanation of any changes.

Question 2:

What costs have been occurred in relation to the FMSC, during the following financial years:

- a) 2017-18
- b) 2018-19
- c) 2019-20
- d) 2020-21

If any of the costs in 1 are not reflected in this answer, please indicate what those costs are and why they are not reflected above.

Question 3:

For each of the following financial years, please provide the contractor costs, total number of contractors employed, hours/tasks contractually required and the total hours worked by contractors in relation to the FMSC:

- a) 2017-18
- b) 2018-19
- c) 2019-20
- d) 2020-21

Question 4:

For each of the following financial years, please provide a list of the types of activities contractors undertook:

- a) 2017-18
- b) 2018-19
- c) 2019-20
- d) 2020-21

Question 5:

For the each of the 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 financial years, please provide:

- a) Budget allocated
- b) Contractor costs already committed to, total number of contractors expected to be employed, and the approximate number of hours contractors will work in relation to these costs
- c) Other costs already committed to (please provide a breakdown by categories)
- d) Projected contractor costs, total number of contractors expected to be employed, and the approximate number of hours contractors will work in relation to these costs
- e) The types of work contractors are expected to complete in relation to (b) and (d)

Question 6:

In October 2018, when talking about the FMSC, the Minister for Home Affairs Peter Dutton said, "This project is critical to maintaining secure borders and will contribute directly to the prosperity, security and unity of the nation." Can the Department please specify what has been achieved since October 2018 to deliver this project?

Question 7:

In October 2018, when talking about the FMSC, the Minister for Home Affairs Peter Dutton said that the FMSC could see, "drones prowling Australia's far flung ocean boundaries, underseas sensors monitoring shipping movements around our coastlines."

- a) On what basis did the Minister for Home Affairs make this statement?
- b) Has the FMSC delivered any "drones prowling Australia's far flung ocean boundaries, underseas sensors monitoring shipping movements around our coastlines" since the project was launched in October 2018?
- c) Has the Department/ABF signed any contracts that would deliver "drones prowling Australia's far flung ocean boundaries, underseas sensors monitoring shipping movements around our coastlines" since the project was launched in October 2018?
- d) Can the Department please specify what contracts the Department expects to sign in 2020-21 to deliver start to "drones prowling Australia's far flung ocean boundaries, underseas sensors monitoring shipping movements around our coastlines"?

Question 8:

In October 2018, when talking about the FMSC, the Minister for Home Affairs Peter Dutton said that the FMSC, "will deliver new cutting edge technology to respond to current and emerging civil maritime threats to Australia."

- a) Can the Department please specify what "cutting edge technology" this project has delivered since October 2018?
- b) Can the Department please specify what "cutting edge technology" this project is expected to deliver in **2020-21**?

Question 9:

In October 2018, when talking about the FMSC, the Minister for Home Affairs Peter Dutton said that, "Maritime security threats are likely to increase in complexity and severity such as renewed irregular migration and people trafficking, exploitation by transnational organised crime and its possible collaboration with extremist groups."

- c) Can the Department please outline how these threats have evolved since October 2018?
- d) Does the Department continue to believe that maritime security threats are likely to increase in complexity and severity?

Question 10:

Please provide the dates in which written briefs have been provided to the Minister for Home Affairs or his office in relation to the FMSC.

Question 11:

Please provide the dates in which the Minister for Home Affairs has met with Government officials to discuss the FMSC. Please specify which departments and agencies have been present in these meetings.

Question 12:

How many companies have Home Affairs / Australian Border Force officials (or their representatives) met with to discuss the FMSC?

Question 13:

Please provide the dates in which Home Affairs / Australian Border Force officials (or their representatives) met with companies to discuss the FMSC.

Question 14:

Please provide the following information about the FMSC:

- a) What are the objectives of the FMSC?
- b) What are the key performance indicators of the FMSC?
- c) What is the current timeline of the FMSC?
- d) Other than Home Affairs/ABF officials, what other agencies are involved in the FMSC project?

Question 15:

In October 2018, Minister for Home Affairs Peter Dutton said the FMSC project, "will deliver capability progressively and aims to achieve full capability by the end of 2024".

- a) Please specifically list the capabilities that have been delivered through the FMSC since the project's launch date?
- b) Please specify what capabilities will be delivered by the FMSC in 2020-21.
- c) Will the FMSC achieve full capability by the end of 2024?

Question 16:

In October 2018, when talking about the FMSC, Minister for Home Affairs Peter Dutton said that the project had been allocated, 'significant amounts of money in the budget over the forward estimates'.

- a) Was this statement true when the Minister said it in October 2018?
- b) Did the Department advise the Minister that 'significant amounts of money in the budget over the forward estimates' would be provided in the 2019-20 federal budget?
- c) Were 'significant amounts of money in the budget over the forward estimates' delivered to the FMSC when the Treasurer delivered the 2019-20 federal budget?
- d) When did the Department first become aware that 'significant amounts of money' would not be provided over the forward estimates in the FMSC?
- e) When did the Department first advise Minister Dutton that 'significant amounts of money' would not be provided over the forward estimates in the FMSC?

Question 17:

In October 2018, the Department issued a 'Request for information from Industry' - via the AusTender website (reference Home Affairs RFI 07-19). Please provide the following information:

- a) How many companies responded to the request for information?
- b) Please provide a summary of each company's response to the RFI?
- c) Approximately how many pages were provided by each company for the RFI?
- d) Were companies compensated / paid for completing the RFI?
 - i. If yes, what was the total cost paid to these companies? Please also provide the maximum cost provided.

Question 18:

In the response to Question on Notice No. 1163 & 1164, the Department advised in answer to question 7 that the Australian Border Force's costs for 2018-19 exceeded the contract by \$9,492,647 due to increased operational tempo and the indexation of contract rates.

Please provide a breakdown to indicate how much of this \$9,492,647 was in relation to indexation of contract rates, compared to increased operational tempo.

In relation to increased operational tempo, please indicate:

- The projected flying hours for 2018-19
- The projected square nautical miles to be covered for 2018-19
- The actual flying hours for 2018-19
- The actual square nautical miles covered for 2018-19

- The projected number of days that air surveillance assets were operational
- The actual number of days that air surveillance assets were operational

Question 19:

Australian Border Force's air surveillance contract with Cobham Aviation is due to expire in 2021.

- a) Has a decision already been taken to extend Cobham Aviation's contractual arrangements for maritime surveillance?
- If yes:
- Who in the Department/ABF made this decision? And when was this decision made?
 - Please indicate what role the Minister or the Minister's office played in this decision being made? Please include dates the Minister was briefed and/or made a decision/responded to the brief.
 - How long is this extension for?
 - How has the Department calculated the time period the contract will be extended for?
- If no:
- What is the Government's plan for Northern Australia surveillance at the conclusion of the 2021 contract?

- b) Has the Department/ABF commenced any approaches to market with any potential providers for air surveillance arrangements for beyond the original 2021 end-date?

- If yes,
- How many potential providers have been approached?
 - Which of the following stages have commenced – and for how many potential providers:
 - request for tender
 - request for quote
 - request for expression of interest
 - request for information
 - request for proposal.
 - How long is the proposed extension for?
 - How has the Department calculated the time period the contract will be extended for?

- If no:
- What is the Government's plan for Northern Australia surveillance at the conclusion of the 2021 contract?

Question 20:

What assurance can the Department/ABF give that the same delays to the initial FSMC timeframes won't occur again?

Question 21:

If Australia's current air surveillance arrangements are extended, does the Department/ABF expect the annual costs to increase, decrease, or remain the same as the current contract which was first signed in 2006?

Question 22:

What is the Department's assessment of the aerial surveillance fleet currently operated by Cobham?

- If the fleet fit-for-purpose?
- Does the fleet meet deliver on Minister Dutton's assurances that Australia would have, "the best technology available to keep our waters safe"?
- Does the fleet adequately address the increased complex maritime security threats to Australia that the Minister noted in October 2018, which have evolved since the contract was originally awarded in 2006?

Question 23:

How has the Australian Defence Force contribution to Australian Border Force's maritime surveillance changed over the period 2015-16 to 2019-20 inclusive?

Please provide a quantitative measure so that we can understand how ADF assets have been used. For example, please provide for each financial year measures such as:

- The actual flying hours for each financial year
- The actual square nautical miles covered for each financial year
- The number of days that ADF assets were used because ABF assets were unavailable.

Question 24:

Does the Department/ABF agree that the Defence's replacement of its P3 fleet, and increased tasking of P8 for other surveillance tasks will impact the ability of Defence to assist with the ABF's Northern Australian surveillance requirements?

If yes:

- a) How will the Department/ABF maintain Northern Australia surveillance without the same level defence force asset support?
- b) Has the Department/ABF advised the Minister? If yes, when? And what was the Minister's response?

If no:

- c) How does the Department/ABF plan to maintain Northern Australia surveillance levels without access to the P3 and P8?

Questions on notice from Senator Keneally to the Department of Home Affairs

Hong Kong

1. How many citizens from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HK SAR) are currently in Australia? Please provide a breakdown by visa stream and subclass.
2. Please provide the total figure of the cohort described in Question 1 for each month since 1 January 2020?
3. How many voluntary and involuntary deportations have been actioned against HK SAR citizens since 1 January 2020? Please provide a breakdown by month and action type.
4. How many applications have been made under the new visa arrangements announced 17 July 2020? Please provide a breakdown by month and by visa stream and subclass.

Questions on notice from Senator Sheldon to the Department of Home Affairs

1. Since the onset of COVID-19, has any New South Wales Government Minister, Parliamentary Secretary, Government Department or Agency made any representations to the Department in relation to the status of visa workers employed in their offices/agencies? If yes, how many representations have been made?
2. Has any New South Wales Government Minister, or Parliamentary Secretary, made any representations or held discussions with the Department about the visa application or visa status of s47F [REDACTED], who was employed s47F [REDACTED], and was later employed s47F [REDACTED]?
 - a. If yes:
 - i. Please provide a list of which Ministers or Parliamentary Secretaries made these representations / held these discussions, and on what date these representations were made.
 - ii. Please also indicate who in the Department the representations were addressed to, or who in the Department was involved in these discussions.
3. Has any New South Wales Government Department or Agency made any representations or held discussions with the Department about the visa application or visa status of s47F [REDACTED] who was employed s47F [REDACTED], and was later employed s47F [REDACTED]?
 - a. If yes:
 - i. Please provide a list of which Departments or Agencies made these representations / held these discussions, and on what date these representations/ discussion occurred.
4. Is the Department aware of any representations made to any Ministers or Assistant Ministers in the Immigration and Border Protection and/or Home Affairs portfolio since 2013 in relation to the visa application or visa status of s47F [REDACTED], who was employed s47F [REDACTED], and was later employed s47F [REDACTED]?
 - a. If yes:
 - i. Please provide a list of who made these representations / held these discussions, and on what date these representations / discussion occurred.

Questions on notice from Senator Keneally to the Department of Home Affairs (including Australian Border Force)

Questions for the Australian Federal Police

1. The AFP Annual Report indicates that the AFP measures the success of prosecutions through the conviction rate. How many cases involving the AFP are currently before the Courts?
 - a. Please provide a breakdown by crime category.
2. During the past month, how many cases involving the AFP have been finalised?
 - a. What was the conviction rate?
 - b. Please provide the number of cases and conviction rate by crime category.
3. How many tonnes of illicit drugs or precursors have been seized by the AFP:
 - a. In the past month?
 - b. Year to date?

Department of Home Affairs
Key Statistics on the Department's response to COVID

BRIEF**Key Statistics on the Department's response to COVID****Key Statistics**

- As at 10 September 2020, the COVID-19 statistics for the number of employees who have taken COVID-19 related leave are as follows:

	Home Affairs/ABF
Positive Confirmation for COVID-19	0
<i>Recovered from COVID-19</i>	12
No of staff self-isolating as at 0600 hrs 10 Sep	50
Returned To Work	2,690

- All staff positively diagnosed with COVID-19 are now recovered.
- The 2020-21 financial year to date departmental costs related to the COVID-19 response is \$40.4m. This comprises \$30.5m in employee costs and \$9.9m in supplier costs.
- These costs include expenditure under the reactivation of Christmas Island (Operation Ramulus) and will include the Victorian Aged Care Response Centre (VACRC) as incurred.

COVID-19 Expenditure across FY2019/20 and FY2020/21				
CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	TOTAL COSTS (\$m)	FY 2020-21	FY 2019-20
MEASURE				
PPE	Purchases of personal protective equipment	10.3	0.4	9.9
Emergency Accommodation	Includes flights and accommodation and property operating	10.1	-	-
Total Measure		20.4	0.4	20.0
NON-MEASURE				
Staffing costs – NCM	Staffing effort related to the ongoing NCM and secondments to other entities	15.3	3.6	11.8
Staffing costs – Op PINCER	Includes time and effort for budgeted staff working on general COVID-19 activities plus secondments costs	107.7	26.4	81.3
Staffing costs – Op Ramulus	Includes time and effort for staff working on activities related to the reactivation of Christmas Island	0.1	0.1	0.0
Staffing costs – Other	Includes project operating costs, miscellaneous leave and salary adjustment expenses	3.4	0.4	3.0
Additional Passenger Processing	Passenger Card service costs for inbound travellers related to the COVID-19 response in April	0.6	-	-
Audit and legal fees	Engagement to review the Ruby Princess Chronology and legal support services	0.0	-	-
Chartered flights	Chartered flight costs not re-accrued in July	4.8	0.1	4.7
Consultants and contractors	Primarily relates to professional advice and the National Stay at Home call centre service delivery	11.9	0.9	11.0
IT Costs	Includes additional IT costs to support audio conferencing and Telstra NextGen service charges	3.3	0.7	2.6

NCM Supplier costs	Ongoing support and service delivery for the internal taskforce	31.0	-	0.0
Non staff accommodation & travel	Includes costs for flights and accommodation	1.4	-	-
Other expenses	Miscellaneous supplier expenditure related to the COVID-19 response	7.4	2.5	4.9
Property operating	Primarily relates to additional property operating costs to accommodate the COVID-19 response	7.3	0.2	7.0
Security	Includes additional security costs relating to cruise ship responses	1.7	1.1	0.6
Translation services	Relates to the translation of COVID-19 fact sheets and reference material into multiple languages	4.1	2.8	1.3
Transaction processing	Monthly border management service charges related to the advanced travel solution	3.1	1.1	2.0
TOTAL NON-MEASURE		203.1	40.0	163.2
CAPITAL		17.7	2.1	15.6
ADMINISTERED EXPENSES		57.3	39.4	17.8
GRAND TOTAL		298.4	81.8	216.6

Key Talking Points

- Home Affairs continues to monitor the financial, operational and staff wellbeing impacts of COVID-19.
- The Department is balancing its service delivery needs and obligations, while recognising the ongoing impact on the workforce due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to update a range of policies to reflect our current working arrangements and the requirements of states and territories and health advice.
- In line with state and territory guidelines, Home Affairs staff have returned to working from work (WFW) for the following states:
 - Northern Territory from 19 May 2020
 - Western Australia from 2 June 2020
 - South Australia from 9 June 2020
 - Tasmania and Queensland from 16 June 2020.
- The following work arrangements remain in place for the ACT, NSW and VIC:
 - Australian Capital Territory - staff continue to work from home where possible.
 - New South Wales - staff continue to work from home where possible.
 - Victoria - staff continue to work from home unless issued with a permit.

Leave taking and financial impacts

- Due to the 2019-20 Bushfires and COVID-19 pandemic the amount of leave taken has significantly reduced.
- This reflects an increased liability for recreation leave and long service leave since 1 January 2020 of \$45m.
- To ensure the health and wellbeing of our staff and to maintain Departmental productivity the Department is encouraging staff to take leave where possible.

- To assist with this, executive managers are provided with Dashboards showing levels of unscheduled absence (UA), leave and excess leave balances.
- Additionally a Positive Participation Strategy is being developed to better understand and manage leave taking and UA.




Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- The Department continuously monitors the changing clinical advice in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the issuing of PPE to staff.
- We have issued guidance to our staff on the use and disposal of PPE which is clear and appropriate to the roles of officers, according to advice and instructions from the Department of Health and the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC).
- The Department has implemented measures beyond the minimum precautions required by the Department of Health and AHPCC through the Department's PPE fact sheet (updated 24 August 2020) and the PPE advice for ABF officers fact sheet (updated on 12 August 2020).
- These measures have been carefully balanced and weighed against the challenges posed in obtaining and then ensuring continued sufficient supply of PPE for critical and high risk roles.
- We continue to have significant challenges obtaining a stable supply of P2 masks, surgical gowns and face shields as these are prioritised to the clinical health environment.
- The Department has strongly supported the requests by health officials to ensure that PPE is being used strictly in accordance with clinical advice based on the risks posed by the roles and environments in which our officers work.
- To ensure our COVID-19 practices are as up-to-date as possible we have been in regular contact with the Department of Health to re-verify its advice, through our Medical Officers of the Commonwealth (MOC), on several occasions as the situation at the border and within the community evolved.

Consultation

CFO, Stephanie CARGILL

Additional Briefing Material

Responsible Officer	Contact Officer
<p>Pablo Carpay, FAS People and Culture Division</p> <p>s47E(d)</p> 	<p>Caroline Sternberg, AS COVID-19 Taskforce, People and Culture Division</p> <p>s47E(d)</p>  <p>Tracy Hobden, AS Secretary Management Accounting Branch, FAS Finance Division</p> <p>s47E(d)</p> 

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**Home Affairs Portfolio
Department of Home Affairs
Select Committee on COVID-19**

KEY BRIEF

Topic: International Students (impacts and changes)

Responsible Deputy: Mr Andrew Kefford PSM, Immigration and Settlement Services Group

Key Points

- COVID-19 has had a considerable impact on Australia's international education sector. From 1 July 2020 to 31 August 2020 (compared with the same period in 2019):
 - global student visa application numbers declined by 41.2 per cent (from 83,949 to 49,381 applications)
 - offshore student visa applications declined 75.1 per cent (from 41,608 to 10,371)
 - onshore student visa applications declined 7.9 per cent (from 42,341 to 39,010)
- As at 31 August 2020, 78 per cent (498,251) of all (primary and secondary) student visa holders were in Australia.

Student Visa Measures

- The Government announced a significant package of measures to support the higher education sector, and international students, on 20 July 2020. The measures included:
 - re-commencing visa grants for student visa applications lodged outside Australia so when borders re-open, students will have visas and be able to make arrangements to travel
 - since the re-commencement of offshore visa processing on 20 July 2020, 14,848 offshore student visas have been finalised to 31 August 2020.
 - a fee waiver for students who held a student visa on or after 1 February 2020 and who could not complete their courses within their original visa validity due to the impacts of COVID-19
 - allowing time spent studying online to count towards qualifying for a Temporary Graduate Work visa
 - making available an option to apply for and be granted a Temporary Graduate Work visa outside Australia, and
 - allowing up to 90 additional days for applicants to provide results for English language testing, biometrics collection and health checks, where COVID-19 has disrupted access to services.
- In addition to the measures, the 40 hours per fortnight work condition for student visa holders has been relaxed for critical sectors including supermarkets (which ended on 1 May 2020), health (including nurses and medical students), aged care and the disability sector.

Offshore Secure Corridor Pilot Programs

- The Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) are the lead agency on proposed student pilot returns for offshore international students.
- The Department of Home Affairs is working closely with the states and territories, in partnership with education institutions, on pilots for offshore international students to travel to Australia in a managed setting.
- Robust health, quarantine, border and provider protocols will underpin any arrangements in order to ensure a COVID-safe environment for both Australians and international students. Initial pilot programs will be for small numbers of students and work towards the return of international students in larger numbers when conditions allow.

Declines in student visa numbers

- On 29 July 2020, The Australian, in its article “Student Visa Applications Crash”, reported that students applying for visas from offshore fell to less than 5,000 a month in April, May and June 2020.
- The decline in application numbers can be attributed to COVID-19 impacts.
 - The month of May 2020 saw the biggest comparative decrease, with offshore applications falling by 88 per cent when compared with May 2019.
 - Offshore student visa applications fell 8.6 per cent in the period 1 July to 31 December 2019, leading up to COVID-19. This is reflective of a longer-term trend with prospective students applying for student visas in Australia.

Support for international students in Australia

- The Government recognises that some international students may be in financial difficulty and has allowed those who have held a student visa for 12 months or more to access up to \$10,000 of their superannuation in 2019-20 to assist with financial support.
 - Early access to superannuation has not been extended to 2020-21.
- In addition, the Government allocated \$7 million in funding to Red Cross to provide emergency relief to temporary visa holders, including international students.

International students in Australia unable to return to their home country

- On 4 April 2020, the Australian Government announced that the subclass 408 – COVID-19 Pandemic event visa pathway as a visa option of last resort to:
 - ensure visa holders retain their lawful status, so that they are less vulnerable and can adhere to health measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the community
 - provide a pathway for temporary visa holders in Australia who can assist in critical sectors, where it is in the public interest to do so
 - provide a visa pathway for temporary visa holders who are unable to depart Australia and have no other options to extend their stay.

Key Statistics

Student Visas (subclass 500*)	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21 to 31 August 2020	% change 2020-21 over 2019-20 to 31 August
Lodged	374,666	413,333	473,415	395,146	49,381	-41.2%
Granted	343,035	378,292	405,742	340,152	40,527	-45.9%
Refused	31,752	39,729	45,792	32,012	1,083	-89.4%
Refusal Rate	8.5%	9.5%	10.1%	8.6%	2.6%	n/a
Temporary Graduate Visa (subclass 485)	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21 to 31 August 2020	% change 2020-21 over 2019-20 to 31 August
Lodged	43,437	54,849	68,917	77,174	20,512	-0.5%
Granted	41,387	51,656	63,994	63,016	13,758	96.9%
Refused	1,697	1,968	2,133	1,447	28	-91.9%
Refusal Rate	3.9%	3.6%	3.1%	1.9%	0.1%	n/a

*Student visa grant and refusal numbers include statistics for repealed student visa subclasses 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575 and 576.

Consultation

- The Chief Statistician has cleared the statistics contained within this brief.

Additional Information

Statistic and Financial Reporting Period: 1 July to 31 August 2020.

Responsible Officer	Contact Officer
Joe Feld A/g First Assistant Secretary Immigration Programs Division §47E(d)	Jodie Bjerregaard Assistant Secretary Temporary Visa Program Branch §47E(d)

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Home Affairs Portfolio
Department of Home Affairs
Select Committee on COVID-19

KEY BRIEF

Topic: Visa Processing Impacts (including timeframes)

Responsible Deputy: Mr Andrew Kefford PSM, Immigration and Settlement Services Group

Key Issues

Responsible SES Officer – Mr Joe Feld, A/g First Assistant Secretary, Immigration Programs Division

- Visa application rates have reduced by 24 per cent overall (2019-20 compared to 2018-19).
 - There has been a 78 per cent reduction in temporary visa programs, which includes a 94 per cent reduction in the offshore visitor visa program.
 - Applications in the migration program, have remained relatively stable.
- Processing of visa applications has not been suspended, paused or stopped.
 - There is no power under the Migration Act to do so.
 - Available resources have been prioritised to support the Government's COVID-19 response and recovery efforts, especially visa applications linked to travel exemption requests associated with COVID-19 border measures.
- Priority has been given to
 - individuals providing critical or specialist medical services and other critical skills required to maintain the supply of essential goods and services.
 - individuals delivering services in sectors critical to Australia's economic recovery, where no Australian worker is available.
 - individuals whose entry is in Australia's national interest (supported by the Australian Government or a state or territory government authority).
 - immediate family members of Australian citizens and permanent residents.
 - non-citizens with compelling and compassionate circumstances.
 - maintaining the lawful status of non-citizens who are unable to depart Australia.
- Processing times have increased in some categories due to:
 - reduced staffing levels, especially in the Department's overseas network, and
 - access to third party services (e.g. medical examinations, biometrics and English language testing).
- This reflects a prioritisation in effort across the whole of the material before the Department.
 - The Minister has power under the Migration Act to consider and dispose of applications in such order as he or she considers appropriate.
 - A certain level of resources are applied across a range of visa application decision-making functions.

- Particularly in the early stages of the COVID-19 response, decisions were made about work that could not be undertaken due to reduced staffing and access to third party services.
- This has resulted in increased processing times for visa applications not directly linked to the COVID-19 response and recovery.

(If asked) What have been the staffing impacts of COVID-19?

- At the peak, 75 per cent of Australian-based staff from the overseas network were recalled to Australia, and 90 per cent of locally engaged staff (LES) were unable to attend work.
- At 21 September 2020, the onshore immigration delivery network is working at 77 per cent capacity due to staff being redeployed to other areas (including travel exemption processing), on leave or operating at reduced capacity as they attempt to balance working from home with other household COVID-19 impacts.

(If asked) Why aren't visa processing times published on the Department's website?

- Processing times are published monthly on the Department's website and on ImmiAccount.
- Processing times are available for the majority of visa subclasses and citizenship products, but will exclude a few subclasses such as those closed to new entrants, capped and queued, or which have a low volume of applications.
 - Due to COVID-19, more visa products do not have a processing time listed on the website. This is due to reduced visa activity.

(If asked) How many staff are diverted towards travel exemption processing and what has this achieved?

- The Department is directing resources to COVID-19 border measures activities, with approximately 250 departmental and ABF staff now diverted to travel exemption processing and support.
 - Operations have now stabilised, with 99.9 per cent of Outwards travel requests being finalised within 48 hours of receipt, and 96.3 per cent of Inwards travel requests being finalised within seven days of receipt.

(If asked) Why has the Electronic Travel Authority System been disabled? Why are you preventing ETA applications from being lodged?

- The Department is facilitating visas for applicants from ETA eligible countries where these are in line with broader priorities (such as visa applications associated with travel exemption requests).
 - Although ETAs cannot currently be lodged online or via a travel agent, applicants can still apply for an ETA directly with an overseas post.
 - Applicants from an ETA eligible country can also apply for a Visitor visa, including via the Department's online application system in most cases.

Detailed Statistics

- Visas Lodged and Finalised

Between March - August		LODGED			FINALISED		
Visa Program	Visa Category	2019	2020	Variation	2019	2020	Variation
Child Program	Child	1,928	1,323	-31%	1,598	990	-38%
Migration Program	Family	69,550	56,813	-18%	66,909	55,480	-17%
	Other Permanent	34	54	59%	36	54	50%
	Skilled	58,121	54,245	-7%	81,957	38,154	-53%
	Special Eligibility	75	29	-61%	70	33	-53%
Migration Program Total		129,708	112,464	-13%	150,570	94,711	-37%
Temporary Visa Program	Crew and Transit	166,508	113,015	-32%	171,508	113,821	-34%
	Other Temporary	3,248	1,596	-51%	3,360	1,641	-51%
	Student	247,390	136,007	-45%	245,082	118,053	-52%
	Temp Resident (Other Employment)	106,932	73,797	-31%	103,686	54,396	-48%
	Temp Resident (Skilled Employment)	39,207	25,271	-36%	40,612	13,480	-67%
	Visitor	2,841,603	289,373	-90%	2,835,567	226,287	-92%
	Working Holiday Maker	96,430	30,032	-69%	100,015	23,116	-77%
Temporary Visa Program Total		3,501,318	669,091	-81%	3,499,830	550,794	-84%
Resident Return and ADV	Resident Return/ADV	88,343	39,614	-55%	89,359	38,823	-57%
Grand Total		3,719,369	821,169	-78%	3,739,759	684,328	-82%

• Source BP0001 Global Permanent and Temporary visa activity report - excludes Special Category sc444 and Border sc773

- Visa Holders (as at 6 September 2020)

Visa Category	In Australia	Outside Australia
Child	14,296	2,948
Family	323,190	36,692
Offshore Humanitarian	109,645	5,170
Onshore Protection	9,975	296
Other Permanent	25,745	230
Resident Return/ADV	788,753	63,936
Skilled	449,430	73,524
Special Eligibility	1,820	52
Grand Total	1,722,854	182,848



Source BP0071 Permanent visa holders in and outside Australia (daily) report at 2020-09-06

Visa Category	In Australia	Outside Australia
Bridging	332,103	7,194
Crew and Transit	7,613	695,883
Other Temporary	5,333	1,536
Special Category	659,608	116
Student	490,887	140,866
Temp Protection	17,766	87
Temp Resident (Other Employment)	139,237	27,742
Temp Resident (Skilled Employment)	120,075	32,346
Visitor	92,684	3,866,102
Working Holiday Maker	70,356	87,590
Grand Total	1,935,662	4,859,462

Source BP0066 Number of Temporary visa holders in Australia and outside Australia (daily) report at 2020-09-06

Consultation

- The Chief Statistician has cleared the statistics contained within this brief.
- External agencies consulted: N/A

Responsible Officer	Contact Officer
Joe Feld, A/g First Assistant Secretary Immigration Programs Division s47E(d) 	Steph Forrester, A/g Assistant Secretary Visa Business Optimisation Branch s47E(d) 

**Home Affairs Portfolio
Department of Home Affairs
Select Committee on COVID-19**

KEY BRIEF

Topic: Temporary Protection Visa Holders - Access to Health Services and Testing

Responsible Deputy: Mr Andrew Kefford PSM, Immigration and Settlement Services

Key Statistics

- There are currently 1.92 million temporary visa holders in Australia, including about 18,000 Temporary Protection visa category holders.

Visa Category	Number as at 20 March 2020	Number as at 20 September 2020	Change since 20 March 2020 (%)
Special Category	676,613	658,292	-2.7
Student	587,951	478,839	-18.6
Working Holiday Maker	137,461	67,068	-51.2
Temporary Resident (Skilled Employment)	141,578	118,203	-16.5
Crew and Transit	28,976	8,467	-70.8
Other Temporary	5,718	5,334	-6.7
Temporary Resident (Other Employment)	140,737	139,234	-1.1
Temporary Protection	17,088	17,774	4.0
Bridging	276,827	338,435	22.3
Subtotal	2,012,949	1,831,646	-9.6
Visitor	272,902	89,378	-67.2
Total	2,285,851	1,921,024	-16

Key Points

- Temporary Protection (Subclass 785) Visa (TPV) and Safe Haven Enterprise (Subclass 790) Visa (SHEV) holders are eligible for Medicare, and have the same access to COVID-19 testing and treatment as other Medicare recipients.
- Issues relating to access to health services are matters for the Department of Health and state and territory governments.

Background

- Due to the COVID-19 situation, temporary visa holders who are unable to support themselves in Australia have been encouraged to return home when possible to do so.
- TPV and SHEV holders have access to Medicare and may also be eligible for social security payments (Special Benefit).

- Eligibility to access Medicare is determined by Services Australia under the *Health Insurance Act 1973* and related regulations. Asylum seekers who were lawful arrivals, have applied for a Permanent Protection visa, and have work rights are eligible for Medicare. In addition, refugees and asylum seekers can also enrol in Medicare if they hold one of the following temporary visas covered by Ministerial orders:
 - TPV
 - SHEV
 - Illegal maritime arrivals holding a Bridging E (Class WE) visa
 - Illegal maritime arrivals holding a Humanitarian Stay visa (subclass 449)
 - Temporary Humanitarian Concern visa (subclass 786)
- All states and territory governments have publicly advised that they will waive out-of-pocket expenses for Medicare ineligible patients for COVID-19 related diagnosis and treatment.

Related documents

- Further details of measures relating to health and employment services for temporary visa holders are in brief *SB20-000430 – Support for temporary residents (health and employment)*.

Consultation

- External agencies consulted: Department of Health

**Home Affairs Portfolio
Department of Home Affairs
Select Committee on COVID-19**

KEY BRIEF**Topic: Post COVID Immigration****Responsible Deputy:** Mr Andrew Kefford PSM, Immigration and Settlement Services**Key Statistics**

- As at 20 September 2020, there were approximately 1.92 million temporary visa holders in Australia, including about 658,292 New Zealanders.
- Approximately 364,827 temporary visa holders have departed Australia since Australia's border closed on 20 March 2020.

Table 1: Number of Temporary Visa Holders in Australia as at 20 September 2020 – change from 20 March 2020 when the Australian border was closed

Visa Category	Number as at 20 March 2020	Number as at 20 September 2020	Change since 20 March 2020 (%)
Special Category (New Zealanders)	676,613	658,292	-2.7
Student	587,951	478,839	-18.6
Working Holiday Maker	137,461	67,068	-51.2
Temporary Resident (Skilled Employment)	141,578	118,203	-16.5
Crew and Transit	28,976	8,467	-70.8
Other Temporary	5,718	5,334	-6.7
Temporary Resident (Other Employment)	140,737	139,234	-1.1
Temporary Protection	17,088	17,774	4.0
Bridging	276,827	338,435	22.3
Subtotal	2,012,949	1,831,646	-9.6
Visitor	272,902	89,378	-67.2
Total	2,285,851	1,921,024	-16.0

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2020, BP0066

- The Migration Program delivered 140,366 places in the 2019-20 program year, which was a -12 per cent variation from pro-rata (see **Attachment A**).
 - The skill stream delivered 95,843 places (a -11.8 per cent variation on pro-rata).

Key Points

- The Economic and Fiscal Update developed by Treasury in July 2020 forecast that Net Overseas Migration (NOM) would fall to 31,000 in 2020-21, from 232,000 in 2018-19 and 154,000 in 2019-20.

Clearing Officer: s47E(c)

- Overall, visa applications decreased by 79 per cent during July 2020 (100,465 applications) when compared to February 2020 (488,791 applications) (Ref Brief SB20-000431).
- Australia's permanent Migration Program delivered 140,366 places against a planning ceiling of 160,000.
 - COVID-19 had a significant impact on the outcome of the 2019–20 Migration Program, including due to disruption to supporting services such as English Language testing, biometrics and health and character checking.
- In the COVID-19 recovery period, migration, both permanent and temporary, will be a key component of Australia's economic recovery.
- The Australian Government is considering how best to shape the Migration Program to drive economic growth and support job creation during this post recovery phase.
 - A decision on the size and composition of both the 2020-21 Migration and Humanitarian Programs will be announced as a part of the delayed budget process in October.
 - The Government decided in March 2020 that the 2020-21 Migration Program settings remain in place until a further decision is made in the context of the Budget.

If asked: Why shouldn't we reduce migration to protect Australian jobs?

- Migration to Australia will need to be carefully calibrated in order to support economic recovery without jeopardising public health measures or adversely affecting the Australian labour market.
- Migration can assist recovery by providing access to critical skills and generating investment that will support economic growth.
 - The Global Talent program attracts highly talented individuals targeting seven key industries: AgTech, Space and Advanced Manufacturing, FinTech, Energy and Mining Technology, MedTech, Cyber Security, and Quantum Information/Advanced Digital/ Data Science and ICT.
- Migration also contributes to economic growth by increasing the size of the working age population.
 - The IMF estimates that Australia's current migration program will add between 0.5 and 1 percentage points to annual average GDP growth over the period 2020 to 2050 through its effect of limiting the economic impact of Australia's ageing population.

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- Migration also contributes to population growth. Population growth has been driven by NOM in recent years. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics latest release (3101.0 - *Australian Demographic Statistics, Dec 2019*):
 - Australia's population was 25,522,169 people at 31 December 2019.
 - The annual growth was 349,800 people (1.4%).
 - 39.8% of annual growth was due to natural increase, and 60.2% was due to net overseas migration.
- The largest groups of temporary visa holders include 658,292 New Zealanders on the Special Category visa (subclass 444) and student visa holders (478,839).
 - Student visas are demand driven. International students support Australia's international education sector which employed nearly 250,000 people in 2018-19.
 - Visitor visas are also demand driven. In the year to September 2019, Australia received 8.7 million international visitors who injected \$45.2 billion into the local economy.

Consultation

- The Chief Statistician has cleared the statistics contained within this brief.
- Immigration Programs Division.

Attachment A – Migration Program outcomes for 2019-20

Stream/Category	Outcome as at 30 June 2020	% Variation from Pro Rata	2019-20 Planning Ceiling
Skill stream			
Employer Sponsored	29,261	-2.5%	30,000
Skilled Independent	12,986	-22%	16,652
State/Territory Nominated	21,495	-13.9%	24,968
Regional	23,372	-6.5%	25,000
Distinguished Talent	200	-	200
Business Innovation and Investment	4,420	-35.6%	6,862
Global Talent	4,109	-17.8%	5,000
Skill Stream Total	95,843	-11.8%	108,682
Family stream			
Partner	37,118	-6.7%	39,799
Parent	4,399	-40.3%	7,371
Other Family	444	-21%	562
Family Stream Total	41,961	-12.1%	47,732
Special Eligibility	81	-65.7%	236
Total Managed Migration Program	137,885	-12%	156,650
Child	2,481		-
Total Permanent Migration Program	140,366	-12.3%	160,000

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Home Affairs Portfolio
Department of Home Affairs
Select Committee on COVID-19

KEY BRIEF

Topic: Global Business Attraction and Talent Taskforce

Responsible Deputy: Mr Andrew Kefford PSM, Immigration and Settlement Services Group

Key Points

- On 4 September 2020, the Global Business and Talent Attraction Taskforce was announced by the Acting Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs and the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment. The Taskforce is led by Mr Peter Verwer AO as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Global Business and Talent Attraction.
- The Taskforce is leading a whole-of-government campaign to identify and attract high-value businesses and exceptional talent from around the globe to Australia to boost our economic recovery from COVID-19 and create jobs for Australians.
- The two-year initiative is in line with the Government's JobMaker plan and longer-term strategies for developing future-focused industries.
- The Taskforce is hosted by the Department of Home Affairs, partnering with the Australian Trade and Investment Commission, and draws on expertise from the Treasury, the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Trade; Industry, Science, Energy and Resources; Defence; and Education, Skills and Employment.
- Representatives from State and Territory Governments will also participate in the Taskforce to ensure whole-of-nation coordination on this initiative.

Appointment of the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Global Business and Talent Attraction

Mr Andrew Chandler, First Assistant Secretary, Global Business and Talent Attraction Taskforce

- Mr Verwer has been engaged as a Senior Executive Service (SES) Band 3 officer in the Department of Home Affairs. SES are engaged under section 22(2)b of the *Public Service Act 1999*.
- A letter of offer of non-ongoing engagement was sent to Mr Verwer on 5 August 2020. Mr Verwer's appointment is for a specified term of 18 months, from 31 August 2020 until 2 March 2022. As the appointment is for a specified 18 months, Mr Verwer's position was not required to be advertised through the Australian Public Service Gazette.
- Mr Verwer's remuneration is in line with the Executive Remuneration Management Policy.

- Mr Verwer is currently working out of ^{s47E(d)} [REDACTED] and expected to return to Australia in October 2020. Mr Verwer has sought permission from the relevant state authority to self-isolate throughout his 14 day quarantine period in a private residence, in line with the Whole of Australian Government class exemption policy.

Operations of the Global Business and Talent Attraction Taskforce

- The Taskforce is building on Australia's inherent attractiveness as a business and migration destination, which has been amplified by the nation's effective response to COVID-19.
- The Taskforce leverages Australia's competitive advantages and is initially focussing on the fast growing fields of the future; including advanced manufacturing, financial services and health. These sectors reflect key Australian strengths and future growth opportunities.
 - The Taskforce will remain open to broader opportunities and is working closely with the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment and the Minister for Industry, Science and Technology to ensure that activities are aligned with whole-of-government priorities.
- The Taskforce is working with States and Territories to ensure their sectoral priorities are addressed.

Indicative Budget and Staffing

- The Taskforce is funded to 30 June 2022, with a total indicative budget of AUD29.8 million over the financial years of 2020-21 and 2021-22. This funding is expected to be included in the 2020-21 Budget. This includes funding for critically skilled specialists to drive assessment and prioritisation of high values businesses and an extension of the Global Talent officer network to identify exceptional talent overseas.
 - This indicative funding is to establish, operate and staff the Taskforce.
 - The Taskforce currently has 9 staff (excluding Senior Executive Staff).
- Secondees from the following departments are working with the Taskforce:
 - The Australian Trade and Investment Commission,
 - Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and
 - Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources.
- Arrangements for secondments from the Department of the Treasury, the Department of Defence and the Department of Education, Skills and Employment are underway.
- On 7 September 2020, Home Affairs wrote to relevant State and Territory agencies to request the nomination of a formal operational point of contact for the Taskforce and consideration of secondees.
 - The Taskforce is working to progress these matters.

Ministerial Oversight Group

- Oversight of the Taskforce is provided by a ministerial group led by the Acting Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs, and includes:
 - the Foreign Minister,
 - the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment,
 - the Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business,
 - the Minister for Industry, Science and Technology, and
 - the Assistant Treasurer.
- The Ministerial Oversight Group provides strategic guidance to the Taskforce on priorities and opportunities and will review performance.

**Home Affairs Portfolio
Department of Home Affairs
Select Committee on COVID-19**

KEY BRIEF**Topic: Domestic and Family Violence****Responsible Deputy:** Mr Andrew Kefford PSM, Immigration and Settlement Services**Key Statistics****Breakdown of claims under the family violence provisions**

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20 (as at 30/06/20)	% change 2014-15 to 2019-20
Total claims made	454	537	543	614	623	776	70.9
Total grants	494	507	413	493	472	568	15.0

Family Violence Claims and Grants 12, 7 and 2 month comparisons

12 Months	2018-19 full year	2019-20 full year	Difference
CLAIMS	623	776	+25%
GRANTS	472	568	+20%
7 months	Jan to July 2019	Jan to July 2020	Difference
CLAIMS	339	497	+47%
GRANTS	259	390	+51%
2 months	July to August 2019	July to August 2020	Difference
CLAIMS	128	135	+5%
GRANTS	76	92	+21%

Note: No Distinguished Talent visa applicant made claims under the family violence provisions in the reported period.

Note 2: above data cleared. Data is dynamic and there will be minor difference in each month's report; but data is correct at time of reporting. Source BP0044 31 August 2020

If asked: What are the current visa provisions that apply where domestic and family violence are alleged?

- The Department's role to support victims of domestic and family violence is to regularise a person's visa status while they remain in Australia.
- The provision of emergency support is a matter for other agencies.

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- The Family Violence Provisions in the Migration Regulations 1994 enable an applicant to continue with their permanent visa application despite the breakdown of their relationship (married or de facto), if they or a member of their immediate family has experienced family violence committed by their Australian sponsor.
- The provisions exist to avoid a situation where a visa applicant feels compelled to remain in a violent relationship for fear of losing their eligibility for permanent residence.
- The Family Violence Provisions are available to temporary Partner visa holders, Prospective Marriage visa holders who have married their sponsor, and dependent applicants for a Distinguished Talent visa.
- In the 2019-20 program year to 30 June 2020:
 - 776 primary Partner visa applicants sought access to the family violence provisions;
 - 568 permanent Partner visas were granted based on claims of family violence.
- In the last five years, the Department has granted permanent visas to more than 2,400 victims of domestic violence.

If asked: What are the current visa provisions that apply where domestic and family violence are alleged and the family violence provisions do not apply?

- For those on temporary visas, the Department's role to support victims of domestic and family violence is to regularise a person's visa status while they remain in Australia.
- Where the family violence provisions do not apply, the Government's policy is that the visa held by the victim should not be cancelled. This provides the visa holder with the flexibility to allow them to make arrangements to depart Australia or apply for another visa if appropriate.

If asked: Don't you need a dedicated temporary visa for domestic violence victims so they can get the support they need?

- The most important thing is that victims can get emergency support, regardless of visa status.
- No visas have conditions that limit access to emergency supports. The Department's role is to regularise a person's visa status while they remain in Australia. A visa is permission to remain in Australia, whereas emergency and support services are for those people who require those services regardless of their visa status.
- If the family violence provisions do not apply, the Government's policy is that the visa held by a victim of violence should not be cancelled, rather they are given flexibility to make arrangements for themselves and or their families which may include applying for another visa to remain in Australia.

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- A dedicated temporary visa for people in this situation would not mean all victims of domestic and family violence will have access to a permanent visa outcome or the services linked to permanent visas.
 - The need for evidence to meet any visa requirements would also mean necessarily that a visa is not an emergency response.
- The Department works closely with Office for Women, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Department of Social Services, the Department of Health, the Attorney-General's Department and the Australian Institute of Criminology in considering the evidence before the sector.
- This is complex and involves multiple layers of government and portfolios. DSS governs access to crisis payments and individual state and territory governments provide access to services in their jurisdictions.

Key Points

- Combatting violence against women and children is a priority for the Government, which has invested \$840 million since 2013 to address domestic violence, including \$340 million under the Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children.
- On 29 March 2020, the Government announced an additional investment of up to \$150 million toward family and domestic violence services to address the expected increase in these crimes due to COVID-19. Of this investment:
 - \$20 million has already been committed to Commonwealth funded initiatives under the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children and a national information campaign, such as 1800RESPECT and Mensline Australia, and a national information campaign
 - \$32.5 million is being provided to states and territories to help meet urgent needs in priority areas of service delivery.
- Women's Safety Ministers' meetings continue to receive priority under the reformed Commonwealth-State architecture and meetings will occur quarterly.
 - Women's Safety Ministers noted ongoing work in supporting women on temporary visas who are experiencing violence.
 - It remains a priority for all governments who will work together to explore data on the extent of and responses to the issue.

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- The Department engages at the community level to raise awareness of policies and programs for visa holders, including for domestic and family violence. The Department's Community Liaison Officer (CLO) Network, connects with multicultural communities and government partners and has held domestic and family violence sessions throughout COVID-19.
 - For example, on 23 July 2020, the Department in South Australia facilitated a program of online domestic and family violence workshops with community leaders to ensure awareness of domestic and family violence services.
- People in all states and territories without access to Medicare or health insurance, including temporary visa holders and unlawful non-citizens, are able to access free COVID-19 testing and treatment.
- The Department of Social Services (DSS) governs access to crisis payments.

If asked: What Commonwealth criminal legislation addresses particular forms of violence against women and children?

- Human trafficking, slavery, and slavery-like practices, such as forced marriage, are comprehensively criminalised under the Commonwealth Criminal Code, with penalties of up to 25 years' imprisonment.
- The Government provides support to victims of these crimes through its dedicated Support Program. Individuals in, or at risk of, forced marriage can receive up to 200 days of support under the Support Program.
- The Criminal Code also criminalises the use of the internet to threaten, menace, harass, or to distribute private sexual material (including intimate images without consent), including in instances of technology-facilitated domestic or family violence. The maximum penalties for these offences range from 3-10 years imprisonment.
- Australian Border Force officers are specifically trained to identify indicators of cases of human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices. Alleged cases of these crimes are referred to the Australian Federal Police under an established referral protocol.
- Through Australia's Human Trafficking Visa Framework, suspected victims who do not hold a valid visa can temporarily remain in Australia to recover and assist in the administration of criminal justice. Victims may also be eligible for a permanent visa if they have contributed to, or cooperated with, an investigation and would be in danger if they returned to their home country.

If asked: What else does AUSTRAC do to assist visa holders where domestic and family violence is alleged?

- 63% of women experiencing financial stress have been the subject of financial abuse at some point. To assist victims of financial abuse, on 28 May 2020 AUSTRAC announced a change to the anti-money laundering/counter-terrorism financing customer identification and verification rule.
- The change will aid people experiencing domestic and family violence, including financial abuse, where the abuser uses violence and intimidation to restrict a person's access to accounts, funds and benefits.

- The reforms included cross-sector collaboration with banks and community organisations to assist vulnerable groups to access funds and establish financial independence.

If asked: What research is being undertaken into identifying opportunities for intervention and improve criminal justice responses to domestic and family violence?

- The Government continues to fund research to better understand and scope reforms concerning domestic and family violence such as working to identify opportunities for intervention and improve criminal justice responses through the Australian Institute of Criminology.

Background

Strategic Position Used by the Office for Women

- Commonwealth, state and territory governments are currently working together to address issues faced by women on temporary visas experiencing domestic and family violence.
- This is a complex issue that requires the collaboration of all levels of government.
- This issue is a priority for the Minister for Women, who is working closely with her state and territory counterparts to progress practical policy solutions to better support women on temporary visas.

Information from DSS

- Some temporary visa holders can access Special Benefit and the new Coronavirus Supplement if they are in hardship, as well as family payments, such as Family Tax Benefit. This includes holders of temporary partner visas (subclass 309 and 820), temporary humanitarian visas, such as temporary protection visas and safe haven enterprise visa holders (subclasses 785, 786, 790 and 449), and certain bridging visas (subclasses 060 and 070).
- Temporary visa holders who experience family and domestic violence in Australia can also access the same emergency relief services available to the general community, many of which have received additional funding in response to the current health and economic crisis.
- Additionally, Specialised Family Violence Services are available to all people within Australia who meet the eligibility criteria of the specific programs. Individuals are not disqualified from accessing services due to their visa status or length of time in Australia.
- Under normal rules, temporary partner visa holders can be exempt from the waiting period if they have experienced a substantial change of circumstances, such as family or domestic violence. Under current temporary rules, the waiting period is waived for all Special Benefit claimants until 31 December 2020 due to COVID-19.

Recent Media

The **7:30 Report on 22 September 2020** covered the case of Annetta Dunken, a victim of family violence. They reported that she was on a temporary Partner visa and had recently migrated from Poland with her daughter. Her spouse had made threats to her, including in relation to her visa status.

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The report raised concerns about the surge in demand for family violence services as a result of the pandemic. There has been an increase in the number and complexity of cases reported. Data from Women's Safety shows:

- 45% increase in April 2020 compared to April 2019 by women's services
- 80% increase in higher risk cases since lifting of COVID restrictions
- 86% increase in complexity of cases
- 1800-Respect -12% increase May to August 2020

While the report suggested that a temporary visa may assist victims of family violence, the Department's position is that this would not assist with an emergency response in these situations. A comment from Minister Tudge was that 'Departmental policy is that visas will not be cancelled' and did not include any further reference to the family violence provisions or data about permanent visas granted on the basis of family violence.

The key issue, as raised in the 7:30 Report, is that victims need access to financial support, housing and Medicare. The Department's role to support victims of domestic and family violence is to regularise a person's visa status while they remain in Australia. Emergency support is a matter for other agencies.

Additional media about migrants and family violence include:

- *Desperate calls for women's legal help go unanswered under Morrison Government*, Joint media release by Linda Burney, Mark Dreyfus, Julie Collins and Senator Jenny McAllister, 22 September 2020 (**Attachment A**)
- *Suicide cluster highlights dangerous combination of social isolation and family violence for some migrant women*, ABC News, 20 September 2020 (**Attachment B**)
 - Reports on an investigation by Coroner Audrey Jamieson into number of suicides in 2018 and 2019 in the Whittlesea and Hume local government areas, in Melbourne's north.
- *Women facing violence need protection — and their visa status shouldn't matter*, Crikey, 7 September 2020, (**Attachment C**)

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- Concerns raised that, although women on temp visas is a “priority” the only measure mentioned was a network of Community Liaison Officers to spread information. There are calls on the government to allow women experiencing violence to access support regardless of visa status.
- *Violence Against Women: Recession drives rise in home abuse*, Sydney Morning Herald, 14 September 2020 (**Attachment D**)
 - Reports that the national response to the pandemic should strengthen women’s “economic security, independence, economic participation, and decision-making in public life”.
- *Woman who fled domestic violence during lockdown speaks out*, ABC News 23 September 2020 (**Attachment E**)

These articles raise concerns that more needs to be done to support victims of family violence on temporary visas, particularly in relation to access to services.

Consultation

- Immigration Programs Division and Data Division.
- The Department is continuing to work with the Office for Women, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Department of Social Services, the Department of Health, the Attorney-General’s Department and the Australian Institute of Criminology to discuss responses to temporary visa holders experiencing domestic and family violence.

LINDA BURNEY MP

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Desperate calls for women's legal help go unanswered under Morrison Government

September 22, 2020

Legal services are having to turn away up to half the financially disadvantaged and vulnerable women escaping domestic and family violence who come to them desperate for help.

The Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 has today been told frontline legal services dealing with domestic violence matters were already struggling before the pandemic hit, and are now unable to answer 50 per cent of their calls.

Today's evidence shows that the additional funding promised to these services in May was too little and is being delivered too late, and that the Morrison Government must step up and do more.

Day after day we see new evidence of the terrible impact COVID-19 is having on Australian women, but yet again the Morrison Government is only there for the photo op but never the follow-up.

Women's Legal Service Queensland saw a 50 per cent increase in calls for assistance in May and a 30-35 percent increase in August, compared to the same periods last year.

This, at a time when Women's Legal Service Queensland was already having to turn away 40 per cent of its calls - or 6,600 women in need - before the pandemic struck.

The thousands of women and their families who rely on these services deserve better from the Morrison Government.

LINDA BURNEY, MARK DREYFUS, JULIE COLLINS & SEN JENNY MCALLISTER

MEDIA RELEASE - TUESDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 2020

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Suicide cluster highlights dangerous combination of social isolation and family violence for some migrant women

By [Nicole Asher](#)

Posted Sun 20 Sep 2020 at 7:00am, updated Sun 20 Sep 2020 at 10:43am



Priya moved to Melbourne with her husband and it was not long before she feared for her life.
(ABC News: Nicole Asher)

Sleep doesn't come easily for Priya*.

If it's not the ringing in her damaged ear keeping her awake, it's the terrifying dreams of her abuser.

Two years ago Priya packed up her life in India to be with her new husband in Melbourne.

"In our culture, a husband is like a god and I was treating him like a god," Priya said.

"Whatever he said, that was a truth for me.

"When I came to Australia, I was totally dependent on him. He was the one who was guiding me for everything."

But it wasn't long before she feared for her life.

"He dragged me to the washroom and he was just banging my head on the wall," she said.

"The tap in the washroom got inserted in my ear and it was all bleeding.

"Still today I have issues with tinnitus. I had injuries everywhere."

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Priya learnt to dread Friday nights and, at times, she entertained thoughts of suicide.



Priya was worried about the damage to her family's reputation if she left her abusive husband.
(ABC News: Nicole Asher)

She'd dawdle on her way home from work knowing the abuse, at the hands of her husband and brother-in-law, with whom they lived, would escalate and she'd be trapped all weekend.

"One night he jumped on my stomach with his knee and he was punching me, punching me," Priya said, describing abuse at the hands of her husband.

Eventually her boss, familiar with Priya's frequent injuries, suggested she speak to the police.

"I was so not aware about the laws over here," Priya said.

Fear for her reputation, and that of her family in India, meant she stayed with her abuser until late last year.

"I really want a peaceful life, no stress," she said.

Suicides linked by isolation

Priya still hasn't found that peace, regularly checking revenge-porn websites fearing she'll see her face. But she's working through her PTSD with the help of a psychiatrist.

Her story is distressingly common.

The plight of immigrant women like her has been thrown into the spotlight with an investigation by Coroner Audrey Jamieson into a cluster of suicides in the Whittlesea and Hume local government areas, in Melbourne's north.

Over six months in 2018 three women from Epping and Thomastown died by suicide.

Another three women died in similar circumstances in 2019.

If you or anyone you know needs help:

- [Lifeline](#) on 13 11 14
- [Kids Helpline](#) on 1800 551 800
- [MensLine Australia](#) on 1300 789 978
- [Suicide Call Back Service](#) on 1300 659 467
- [Beyond Blue](#) on 1300 224 636
- [Headspace](#) on 1800 650 890
- [ReachOut](#) at au.reachout.com
- [Care Leavers Australasia Network \(CLAN\)](#) on 1800 008 774

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Chris Howse says social isolation is the common factor in all of these cases. (ABC News: Nicole Asher)

Chris Howse, the principal solicitor at the Whittlesea Community Legal Service, was instrumental in getting the coroner to investigate the cluster.

"All women were from the South Asian community and there was evidence of isolation with respect to every single one of them," Mr Howse said.

"The implication is that women are newly arrived, they're isolated and have few friends.

"There is the suggestion with respect to some of those deaths that family violence was in the background."

Mr Howse said the issues in the Whittlesea community were not unique to the area.

"Family violence transcends race, despair and isolation transcend race," he said.

"Although [Whittlesea's] not ground zero for any of those problems necessarily, we are very close. We vie with the City of Hume."

Vulnerabilities underpinning suicides 'still playing out'

This month the coroner recommended more targeted support be considered for the Indian and Sri Lankan communities in Melbourne's north to prevent further suffering.

"Whittlesea is disproportionately affected by lack of access to mental health and family violence services, compared with other municipalities," Ms Jamieson wrote in her coronial reports.

She described a combination of family violence, financial control, patriarchal family structures, social isolation, and a lack of understanding of rights as stressors.

"The vulnerabilities that underpin these suicides are still playing out there in that community," Mr Howse said.

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Dr O'Connor says more help is needed for the women including information about what their rights are. (ABC News: Nicole Asher)

Psychiatrist Manjula O'Connor mainly works with South Asian women and domestic violence in her practice.

While family violence is a problem that transcends cultural groups and socio-economic levels, Dr O'Connor said more needed to be done to support newly arrived South Asian women.

Dr O'Connor founded the Australasian Centre for Human Rights and Health, which runs programs using theatre to educate and break down social isolation.

She said the support needed to start before the women left their home countries.

"At the time of the visa, the Government needs to make sure they have the pamphlet in their hand, which gives them all the numbers of the family violence support services and mental health support services," Dr O'Connor said.

She said education about gender relations should be included in settlement programs once they land in Australia.

Local health services also had to be educated in ways to identify and help women of the demographic, Dr O'Connor said.

Women band together online



Noticing her injuries, Priya's boss suggested it was time to go to police. (ABC News: Nicole Asher)

The coroner instructed Victoria's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to review the services that support South Asian women in Whittlesea.

In a statement, the department said it had already made funding available to a raft of services to "deliver essential mental health supports and practical assistance for CALD communities".

"We've already begun working on a coordinated response across the local area health network, Whittlesea Council and local service providers to ensure the community can access the help they need," a department spokesperson said.

In the meantime, and as word of the crisis spread, South Asian women in Whittlesea rallied on social media, organically breaking down the deadly isolation.

"There was an outpouring on behalf of women — woman-to-woman — saying I'm here 24/7, where there's despair, where you're stuck, where you're vulnerable, just ring me, Facebook me, I don't care what time of the day or night, " Mr Howse said.

"That was the tenor of many, many Facebook posts rebounding around that community. That's what we want to tap in to."

***Priya did not want her real name used for privacy reasons.**

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Women facing violence need protection — and their visa status shouldn't matter

Women affected by domestic violence should have access to all the social support they require. Visa status shouldn't get in the way of that.

GINA RUSHTON SEP 07, 2020 2



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The logo for Crikey, featuring the word "Crikey" in white, bold, sans-serif font on a red rectangular background.

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Anjali* had to make a terrifyingly quick decision in 2016 when her husband held a broken glass and threatened to kill her. She knew inviting law enforcement into their Sydney home might threaten his visa status — which her own visa was tied to — and in turn the stability of her two daughters' lives. But after almost two decades of violence she wanted safety for her and her children.

“Within two minutes [the police] came and they witnessed everything and they protected me and they arrested him,” she said. “I am sure he would not spare me next time and if I were to see him now I would collapse from terror.”

Anjali did not know which visa she was on as her husband had controlled the paperwork, nor that it was about to expire. So she unknowingly entered a period of unlawfulness without a valid visa.

She is now on a bridging visa with no worker's rights and her rent is only just covered by the money her teenage daughters earn at a fast-food restaurant after school.

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for workers' comp
mestic violence

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If not for an additional payment from the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) they would face homelessness because temporary visa holders without worker's rights have no access to housing, Medicare or Centrelink, including JobKeeper or JobSeeker.

In May international student Kamaljeet Sidhu, 27, was allegedly murdered by her husband, Baltej Lailna, against whom she had taken out an apprehended violence order (AVO) four weeks earlier.

The night before she was stabbed to death, dozens of front-line domestic violence workers from across New South Wales took part in a webinar addressing the challenges faced by women on temporary visas who were trying to escape violence during the pandemic.

Services want the federal government to allow these women to access social support no matter their visa status.

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Women's Safety Council,
and federal politicians, GET 12 WEEKS FOR \$12

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met to discuss how to reduce violence against women and their children during the pandemic. In the [list of outcomes](#) it acknowledged the pandemic had “coincided with the onset or escalation of violence and abuse for women” and that women on temporary visas experiencing violence was a “priority”.

But the only measure it mentioned to address that was a network of “community liaison officers” who spread information about options to access support services for visa holders. But it didn’t acknowledge how slim those options are.

“There is no substance in how they plan to address the problem,” said Isobel McGarity, a lawyer with the Refugee Advice and Casework Service (RACS) in Sydney.

RACS and JRS made a joint submission to the government’s inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence, calling on the government to allow women experiencing violence to access support regardless of visa status.

Although people on temporary protection visas [no longer have to produce police](#)

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hospital treatment (at
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arity says many

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women on certain temporary visas,
especially those without work rights,
can't access Medicare.

"Often a GP is the first place where a
woman will disclose violence," she said.

Scenarios like Anjali's are
common: "Women will come to our
service and have no idea what their visa
status is and what has been submitted
on their behalf."

Australia does have the Status
Resolution Support Services (SRSS)
payment for people waiting to hear about
their immigration status, but the eligibility
has tightened.

"It's so hard to get anyone on the SRSS
payment," JRS director Carolina
Gottardo said. "The policy of this
government is to support people to
return overseas but when they can't
return overseas you leave them with
nothing and people end up in total
destitution and then the NGOs have to
come in."

One woman seeking asylum was
recently ruled ineligible for the payment,
which is about 89% of the JobSeeker

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umstances were
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those of her violent

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ex-husband who was the primary visa applicant and who she was trying to leave.

She turned up at JRS with her suitcases and kids in the car but the service was unable to find her last minute emergency assistance. She chose returning to her abuser over homelessness.

It was a missed opportunity, Gottardo says, as most women are too scared to disclose the violence to anyone.



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“When there’s a claim for asylum this woman’s visa depends on her husband’s and that is a big reason why they are very reluctant to report violence as they’re worried about deportation,” she said.

“One woman told us that with the uncertainty of her visa status and the possibility of losing her children her husband’s violence was the least of her problems and so she didn’t report it.”

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service helped Anjali
us hit but she had to GET 12 WEEKS FOR \$12

return for more help after she lost her
cash-in-hand job in the pandemic.

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“We have referred her for legal advice,
counselling, accommodation assistance
and DV assistance, but she is unlikely to
get that because it is almost impossible
to get now,” Gottardo said.

[A survey](#) of more than 5000 temporary
visa holders found 65% had lost their
jobs and 39% struggled to cover living
expenses.

Calls to JRS for every kind of support
have increased by 224% since March,
Gottardo says.

Despite the AVO Anjali still doesn't feel
safe. Her family in India encouraged her
to stay with her husband.

“I used to make recordings of him
silently so I could send them to my mum
and say, ‘Why did you make me marry
him?’ But she doesn't care ... She once
called me back and said, ‘Don't spoil
your father's name or your brother's
name. Just try to settle [your husband]
down.’ ”

Anjali has been seeing a counsellor
courtesy of JRS and says it has enabled

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How much trauma she
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She felt like she couldn't breathe when she was living under her husband's tyranny, but now she can.

"We are living hand to mouth at the moment but I can never lose hope and we will keep our karma clean as God is always there," she said. "I have been protected by angels so far."

**Name changed.*

If you or someone you know is affected by family or domestic violence, call 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732 or visit 1800RESPECT.org.au.

[Lifeline](#) is on 13 11 14 and [Beyond Blue](#) is 1300 22 4636. In an emergency, call 000.



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Editor-in-chief of *Crikey*

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Gina Rushton

Gina Rushton is a journalist and writer who has written for *BuzzFeed News*, *The Saturday Paper*, *The Australian*, *Meanjin* and *The Lifted Brow*. She is a Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and

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Justice 2020? Court lets cop who leaked address of domestic violence victim walk free with no record

JUSTICE
MICHAEL BRADLEY
SEP 03, 2020

It's supposed to be the central concern of the criminal justice system to protect people from criminals, not to facilitate their wrongdoing.



Employers have a duty to keep staff safe, no matter where they work

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
GINA RUSHTON
JUN 22, 2020

A landmark ruling has brought into sharp relief the potential responsibilities of Australian employers to workers experiencing violence.



'Big ramifications': insurer liable for workers' comp for domestic violence victim

BUSINESS
AMBER SCHULTZ
JUN 02, 2020  2

The family of a woman killed in a domestic violence incident while working from home will be paid workers' compensation, in a decision that could effect how employers assess home office safety.

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**Kent Williams** ⌚ 15 days ago

Why a picture of woman with hijab?
Inference seems to be that Muslim women
women are the victims of domestic
violence. Will cancel my Crikey
subscription as it seems you re
perpetuating the hateful stereotypes of the
“mainstream” Australian media.

+ 1 -

**respallturner** ⌚ 15 days ago Reply to [Kent Williams](#)

I have dealt and tried to help
women of the Islamic faith who
have been victims of domestic
abuse. As long as people avoid
pointing them out for fear of being
deemed racist, the less likely it is for
us to get help for these women; the
less likely their community will step
in to assist.

+ 1 -

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14 SEP, 2020

Recession drives rise in home abuse

Sydney Morning Herald, Sydney

Page 1 of 2

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Recession drives rise in home abuse

Lucy Cormack

Frontline domestic violence specialists say the economic impacts of COVID-19 are disproportionately affecting victims, trapping them in situations of abuse due to financial dependence, unemployment and a lack of affordable accommodation.

A survey of specialists at 34 community services across NSW found rising rates of women experiencing domestic violence since the onset of the pandemic, with more than 85 per cent recording an increase in the complexity of client cases.

"The biggest concerns being flagged by frontline specialists at the moment are that perpetrators are ramping up their use of violence and abuse in the context of excessive drug and alcohol misuse, unemployment, and financial pressures," said Hayley Foster, chief executive of peak body Women's Safety NSW, which conducted the survey.

"The results emphasised the economic impacts, which are driving an escalation of violence and abuse, while at the same time leaving victims with less financial means to escape their abusers."

In July, the Australian Institute of Criminology confirmed the pandemic coincided with the onset or escalation of violence and abuse.

A survey of 15,000 women in May found 4.6 per cent experienced

physical or sexual violence from a partner or former cohabiting partner

in the three months prior. Almost six per cent of women experienced coercive control and almost 12 per cent suffered emotionally abusive, harassing or controlling behaviour. Two-thirds said the violence had started or escalated in the three months before the survey.

"This crisis has disproportionately affected women. Workplaces and governments must not lose sight of the link between gender equality and preventing violence against women," said former senator and inaugural chair of Our Watch Natasha Stott Despoja.

"That means applying a gendered lens to all policies and legislation, like ensuring the economic stimulus measures do not disproportionately benefit male-dominated industries."

She said the national response to the pandemic should strengthen women's "economic security, independence, economic participation, and decision-making in public life".

Fran Bowick is a domestic and family violence counsellor and case worker at Bondi Cottage in Sydney's east, where the caseload tripled earlier this year, freezing new referrals for a period. She said one of the biggest barriers for women achieving independence in life after violence was finding a safe place to live.

In the past year, domestic and

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14 SEP, 2020

Recession drives rise in home abuse

Sydney Morning Herald, Sydney

family violence accounted for more than one-third of homelessness in NSW with more than 25,000 women and children escaping violence requiring assistance.

“One of my clients ended up homeless because she couldn’t pay rent and she was evicted. She and her 15-year-old daughter were living in a tent at the back of a sailing regatta during the school holidays,” Ms Bowick said. “She had already been approved for priority housing, but there was no available stock.”

Ms Bowick said local and state governments needed to consider greater use of alternative funding models for victims of violence, such as subsidised private rental.

Domestic Violence NSW recently called on the state government to build 5000 social houses every year for the next 10 years. Chief executive Delia Donovan said she was not “optimistic” about the proposal’s success but “if we don’t do something now, we are going to end up in a really serious situation in years to come”.

Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence Mark Speakman said he was aware of the added pressure on frontline services due to the pandemic, prompting an investment of more than \$30 million by the state and Commonwealth governments.

“Twenty-eight people were murdered in domestic violence incidents in NSW in the year to June 2020, with tens of thousands of domestic violence assaults reported to police,” he said.

Former chief executive of DVNSW Moo Baulch said the past 12 months had been “tumultuous,” with a number of horrific domestic violence deaths, among them Hannah Clarke and her three children.

The Brisbane family was killed by Ms Clarke’s estranged husband.

Despite hopes for reform in the wake of the family’s death, an initial

inquiry closed three months early, without taking submissions or holding public hearings.

Federal Minister for Women Marise Payne announced a parliamentary inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence, which held hearings earlier this month.

‘This crisis has disproportionately affected women.’
Natasha Stott Despoja, Our Watch



Bondi Cottage domestic violence case worker Fran Bowick. Photo: Dominic Lorrimer

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**Home Affairs Portfolio
Department of Home Affairs
Select Committee on COVID-19**

KEY BRIEF

Topic: National Coordination Mechanism Overview

Responsible Deputy: Paul Grigson, Social Cohesion & Citizenship

Key Statistics

- Between 6 March and 31 August 2020, the National Coordination Mechanism (NCM) has coordinated **126** meetings across **25** sector themes. Key sector meetings have included:
 - **39** First Ministers' Departments meetings
 - **8** Managing International Arrivals sector meetings
 - With an additional **31** Working Group operational meetings
- In addition, following a Food and Grocery NCM, the Supermarkets Taskforce was established on 16 March 2020 to work with industry on critical food supply issues.
- **30** Supermarket Taskforce meetings (Food and Grocery NCM inclusive) with an additional **41** operational Working Group meetings have been held. For more information on the Supermarkets Taskforce, see SB20-000595.

Key Points

- On 5 March 2020, the NCM was commissioned by the National Security Committee of Cabinet (NSC) to provide a centralised coordination function for the whole-of-government non-health response to COVID-19, and support a consistent national approach, where possible.
- The NCM works with Commonwealth, state and territory governments and industry to:
 - Identify and respond to rapidly emerging risks in key sectors;
 - Enhance collaboration and improve information flows between levels of government for decision making; and
 - Resolve barriers to ensure all Australians can continue to access everyday necessities.
- Key outcomes of NCM activities in Australia's COVID-19 response have included:
 - Strategic support to the Prime Minister and National Cabinet, providing coordinated national responses to issues on:
 - domestic border control measures,
 - implementing Stage Four Restrictions,
 - collating industry feedback and advice on Victoria's restrictions,
 - building on the 3 Step Framework for a COVIDSafe Australia (endorsed in May 2020).

- Coordinating the maintenance of critical supply chains, ensuring provision of essential goods and services for all Australians, particular for vulnerable groups and remote communities and that critical infrastructure could be serviced;
- Supporting preparedness planning for potential COVID-19 outbreaks in sectors including resources, maritime crews, correctional and immigration detention facilities;
- Preparing the Emergency Management sector in conjunction with Emergency Management Australia (EMA) for the 2020-21 extreme weather season under current COVID safe requirements and border restrictions.
- The NCM continues to provide Commonwealth coordination and support to continuing national responses, including:
 - secretariat support for the ongoing management of international arrivals to Australia and related quarantine requirements (see SB20-000919 Repatriation and Quarantine);
 - escalating issues at Australian borders and travel exemptions (see SB20-000475 Travel Exemptions);
 - working with the Supermarkets Taskforce;
 - the Victorian second wave COVID-19 response (see SB20-000627 Victorian Aged Care Response Centre).
- The NCM is similarly prepared to participate in future outbreak preparatory activities and management for non-health sectors.
- From 1 July 2020, the NCM is a permanent function of the Department of Home Affairs, with work underway to scale the NCM to respond to future natural, man-made or cyber crises.

“If asked” National consistency for key issues such as cross border restrictions, quarantine arrangements, and management of essential services and workers.

- While the NCM seeks to promote national consistency to non-health related activities, it also respects the sovereignty of the States and Territories under our federated system of government.
- Under the Australian Constitution, the States and Territories retain responsibility for schools, hospitals, police and emergency services, among other things.
- The NCM has established collaborative forums and a mechanism to engage with state and territory agencies, which has provided the space to discuss issues and seek mutually agreed outcomes and solutions.
- Throughout engagements, the NCM has highlighted the importance of having consistent processes and communications, across all States and Territories, particularly in the areas of cross-border movement requirements, freight and the management of essential services

Consultation

- Supermarkets Taskforce, Australian Border Force, Emergency Management Australia

**Home Affairs Portfolio
Department of Home Affairs
Select Committee on COVID-19**

KEY BRIEF

Topic: Victorian Aged Care Response Centre

Responsible Deputy: Mr Marc Ablong PSM, National Resilience and Cyber Security Group.

Key Points

- The Department of Home Affairs deployed a senior executive officer from Emergency Management Australia to establish the Victorian Aged Care Response Centre in support of the Department of Health. The centre was established and operational on the 27 July 2020.
- The Department of Home Affairs has provided support personnel, physical premises, logistical support and information and technology systems for the response centre operations. This support will continue for the duration of this operation.
- The response centre is Commonwealth led by the Department of Health in partnership with the Victorian Government. It has been operational for eight weeks, and is staffed by 65 multi-disciplinary personnel from 22 different organisations.
- Victoria has 767 aged care facilities with more than 52,000 residents. At the peak of the response 129 aged care facilities had outbreaks and 13 were acute. Currently there are no aged care facilities considered as acute and two facilities that remain on watch.
- The response centre has coordinated rapid response and a concurrent prevention program. The response centre is now coordinating the repatriation of aged care residents returning from hospitals to aged care facilities and moving to recovery arrangements. The response centre has deployed specially trained ADF personnel to undertake prevention visits, to-date 492 visits have been completed.

Related documents

- Attachment A: COVID-19 Key Statistics

Consultation

- Victorian Aged Care Response Centre

Responsible Officer Marc Ablong PSM Deputy Secretary National Resilience and Cyber Security s47E(d)	Contact Officer David Bachi Acting Director-General Emergency Management Australia s47E(d)
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ATTACHMENT A

Key Statistics

COVID-19

Australian cases as at 1500 hrs Wednesday 23 September:

- A total of 26,973 cases of COVID-19 has been reported domestically, including 859 deaths.
- Over 7,393,500 tests have been conducted in Australia.

Australian confirmed cases by jurisdiction			
Jurisdiction	Confirmed cases	Recovered	Deaths
ACT	113	110	3
NSW	4,212	2,989	53
NT	33	33	0
Qld	1,153	1,124	6
SA	467	462	4
Tas.	230	217	13
Vic.	20,100	18,713	771
WA	665	650	9
TOTAL	26,973	24,298	859

Events and updates

- As at 1530 hrs Wednesday 23 September, more than 7.09 million people have downloaded and registered for the COVID Safe app.

**Home Affairs Portfolio
Department of Home Affairs
Select Committee on COVID-19**

KEY BRIEF

Topic: NSW Special Commission of Inquiry - Ruby Princess – Commonwealth Engagement

Responsible Deputy: Pip de Veau, Legal Group

Key Points

- On 15 April 2020, the New South Wales Premier, the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian MP, announced the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Ruby Princess (the Commission) with Bret Walker SC appointed as the Commissioner.
- The Report of the Commission was provided to the NSW Premier and Governor on 14 August 2020 and made public that afternoon.
- The Commission's terms of reference required the Commissioner to inquire into, and report on, considerations including the information, communications, decisions, actions, policies and protocols of Commonwealth agencies including the Australian Border Force (ABF) and the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.
- The Commonwealth provided four sets of submissions or statements to the Commission.
 - The Voluntary Statement of 12 June 2020 described the legal and policy framework within which actions of officers of the Department (including officers of the ABF), Commonwealth Department of Health, and the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment occurred. It also provided a narrative chronology of key communications, decisions and actions of ABF, Agriculture and Commonwealth Health, having regard to the steps contemplated by that legal framework.
 - The Voluntary Submission of 16 July 2020 addressed 35 questions from the Commissioner directed to the Commonwealth in various correspondence. The key topics addressed in the Voluntary Submission included the requirements of the National Protocol; communication of advice from NSW Health to Agriculture; Agriculture's on board checks; pratique and other matters raised by the Commission.
 - The Supplementary Voluntary Submission to the Commission of 31 July 2020 responded to correspondence from the Commission seeking the Commonwealth's views on whether the Ruby Princess was a 'round trip cruise' for the purposes of the *Migration Act 1958*.

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- The Further Supplementary Voluntary Submission of 3 August 2020 responded to an invitation by the Commission to address the issues canvassed in media reporting about the role of the ABF in relation to the arrival and disembarkation of the Ruby Princess.
- The Voluntary Statement and Submissions were accompanied by a considerable number of policy and operational documents, and relevant correspondence to assist the Commission.
- The Commonwealth's Voluntary Statement and Voluntary Submissions were tendered as exhibits and are publicly available on the Commission's website along with the accompanying attachments. Correspondence between AGS and the Commission is also published on the Commission's website.
- It is the Commonwealth's understanding that the provision of this information was helpful to the Commission. The Commonwealth's assistance was described, by Senior Counsel Assisting the Commission, as 'extremely detailed and of great assistance to the Commission'.
- The Commonwealth cooperated with the Commission consistent with historical levels of participation in State and Territory inquiries.
- On 7 July 2020, the Commissioner issued a summons which purported to require an officer of the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment to appear and give evidence at a hearing on 15 July 2020. Through AGS, the Commonwealth requested the summons be withdrawn for lack of power, as the Commonwealth's longstanding position is that neither it, nor its officers, are generally bound by the compulsory powers of state and territory Royal Commissions or equivalent bodies.
 - The Commission declined to withdraw the summons but indicated it would not seek to enforce it by issuing a warrant requiring the officer's attendance to give evidence. Initially, the Commission also declined to excuse this officer from attending which risked, if she did not attend, committing a criminal offence.
 - s42
[REDACTED]
AGS also prepared a Voluntary Submission which included responses to specific questions from the Commission about the officer's role in granting pratique. Upon receipt the Commissioner subsequently exercised his powers to excuse the officer from attending the Commission in response to the summons and accordingly it was not necessary for the Commonwealth to lodge legal proceedings.
- No requests were made for the attendance of ABF officers to give evidence and nor were any summonses issued to the ABF

**Home Affairs Portfolio
Department of Home Affairs
Select Committee on COVID-19**

KEY BRIEF

Topic: Ruby Princess – Timelines / Decisions made by State, ABF and Commonwealth

Responsible Deputy: Pip de Veau, General Counsel, Group Manager Legal Group

Key Points

- The ABF and DHA had no responsibility under the *Biosecurity Act 2015* for biosecurity or human health biosecurity in relation to the Ruby Princess, as confirmed by the NSW Inquiry into the Ruby Princess. Senators' questions on Biosecurity matters would be better answered by DAWE, but important Biosecurity decisions are included in the timeline. In 2016 the Commonwealth Department of Health entered into arrangements with the NSW Department of Health which had the effect that NSW Health officers provided human biosecurity services to the Commonwealth, and NSW Health officers were appointed human biosecurity officers under the *Biosecurity Act 2015* including a Chief Human Biosecurity Officer for NSW.

NOTE: Responsibility for managing human health biosecurity regarding cruise ships under the Biosecurity Act was effectively a joint responsibility between the Commonwealth Department of Health, DAWE and the NSW Department of Health. Broadly: Commonwealth Health was responsible for developing national medical public health policies, including a national protocol for cruise ships; NSW Health provided the medical expertise and human health biosecurity assessments for NSW arrivals, advising DAWE in that regard; and DAWE had responsibility for granting pratique under the Biosecurity Act.

- **4 September 2019** - ABF grants "round trip cruise" status pursuant to s.169(3) of the Migration Act for several planned Ruby Princess cruises in the period November 2019 – March 2020, including a cruise from Sydney – New Zealand – Sydney from 8 March 2020 to 21 March 2020. The determination's legal effect is that persons who complete the round trip cruise are deemed to have not left Australia and are not required to be immigration cleared on return to Sydney, due to s.80 Migration Act. Only persons who joined the cruise in New Zealand, "way port joiners" were required to be immigration cleared when the Ruby Princess returned to Sydney.
- **8 March 2020** - Ruby Princess docks in Sydney at the completion of the previous round trip cruise to New Zealand. NSW Health assessed the ship as medium risk and NSW Health officers attend the arrival of Ruby Princess. No passengers were allowed to disembark until after swabs taken from passengers are tested for COVID and they all came back negative.
 - That delays by several hours the embarkation of passengers on the Ruby Princess for the fateful round trip cruise that leaves later that day and is due to come back on 21 March.

- **15 March 2020** - Government announces ban on cruise ships arriving in Australia, one exception being cruise ships who have an already scheduled arrival date, which includes the Ruby Princess.
 - ^{s42} [REDACTED] the ABF on 15 March revoked and reappointed 9 major ports including Sydney (that frequently receive cruise) under s.15 of the *Customs Act 1901* so that these are not appointed ports for international cruise ships. (It remained open to a Collector to grant permission to cruise ships to arrive in these ports pursuant to s.58 Customs Act. Such a permission was granted for the Ruby Princess, to give effect to the government's announcement that the cruise ship ban did not extend to ships already destined for Australia.)
 - Email message sent by ABF to cruise ship industry including Carnival entitled "Updated maritime advice following the Government announcement on 15 March 2020" which attached the first version of the ABF "Messaging to Cruise Ship Passengers" document. The ABF document referred to a 14 day isolation period commencing from leaving the last overseas port, and also stated that passengers can complete onwards domestic or international travel.
 - Ruby Princess cuts short its NZ cruise, and heads back to Australia that day.
- **16 March 2020** - NSW *Public Health (COVID-19 Quarantine) Order 2020* is made. That order commenced on 17 March 2020. It required persons arriving in NSW who have been in any foreign country in the last 14 days to self-isolate for 14 days in suitable accommodation, with limited exceptions including passengers transiting through Sydney airport, but NOT including arriving cruise ship passenger with onwards travel booked.
- **17 March 2020** - Email message sent to cruise ship industry entitled "Updated messaged for cruise ship travellers dated 17 March 2020" which attached an updated version of the ABF "Messaging to Cruise Ship Passengers" document and two Commonwealth Health Factsheets including the "Information for International Travellers" one. The ABF document referred to a 14 day isolation period commencing from leaving the last overseas port, and also stated that passengers can complete onwards domestic or international travel.
 - ^{s42} [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]
 - (NSW authorities had not consulted or briefed Commonwealth or ABF regarding that the NSW Public Health Order in effect prevented onwards travel by cruise ship passengers. ABF was therefore unaware of this requirement when Ruby Princess arrived on 19 March 2020).

¹ NSW Inquiry Report at 13.13

- **18 March 2020**

- A NSW Health panel assessed the human health risk of the Ruby Princess arrival as “low” and decided that NSW Health would not attend the Ruby Princess upon arrival, and the passengers may disembark (i.e. without further human health assessment). NSW Health communicates this decision to DAWE and to Carnival’s port agent. No Commonwealth officer formed part of that NSW Health risk assessment process.

NOTE: The Commonwealth’s position in the NSW Inquiry is that DAWE and the Commonwealth relied on this NSW Health assessment, including in relation to DAWE granting actual or practical pratique, since DAWE did not have the medical expertise to assess the human health risk.

- 1650hrs Permission is given by the Maritime Traveller Processing Committee MTPC (which has ABF and DAWE members) for Ruby Princess to arrive in Sydney on 19 March in accordance with s.58 Customs Act and s.247 Biosecurity Act. (Permission was required under s.58 Customs Act because Sydney was no longer an appointed port for international cruise ships.)
- The *Biosecurity (Human Biosecurity Emergency) (Human Coronavirus with Pandemic Potential) (Emergency Requirements) Determination 2020* is made by the Minister for Health and prevents cruise ships arriving in Australia subject to exceptions: including for cruise ships already heading to an Australian port on 15 March, which the Ruby Princess was.

Disembarkation of passengers

- All 2,647 passengers disembarked on Thursday 19 March 2020 and were advised in a Commonwealth Health Fact Sheet provided to each passenger to self-isolate at home or in their accommodation for a period of 14-days. We understand this was in accordance with a NSW Public Health Order for quarantine then in place in New South Wales, as well as then current Commonwealth Health policies.

The following is a timeline of events concerning disembarkation.

18 March 2020	Event
18:33hrs	Carnival email advises ABF and DAWE and NSW Ports regarding a proposed timetable for the Ruby Princess arrival and disembarkation, including two medical disembarkations requiring ambulances at 3am.
19 March 2020	Event
05:59hrs	Officer ^{s47E(c)} , supervisor of Officer ^{s47E(c)} who led the ABF team attending Rudy Princess, asked ^{s47E(c)} “to investigate information about ill passengers on the Ruby Princess and provide a report. Officer ^{s47E(c)} later forwarded an email chain making the same request, at 0700.

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06:15 approx	DAWE ^{s47E(c)} confirms to Officer ^{s47E(c)} at the Overseas Passenger terminal at the overseas passenger terminal that NSW Health would not be attending and had deemed the vessel low risk. Officer ^{s47E(c)} then boards the Ruby Princess with two other ABF officers. ^{s47E(c)} , a DAWE officer and an appointed <i>biosecurity officer</i> under the Biosecurity Act, was also on board.
06:20 approx	Officer ^{s47E(c)} after being informed by purser that 11 passengers are in isolation tells the purser that these passengers need to remain in isolation until all other passengers have been processed.
06:30-7:00 approx	After the conclusion of ABF's customs and immigration checks, including face to passport checks of way port joining passengers and crew, Officer ^{s47E(c)} replies "yes" to a request from Ruby Princess crew whether passengers can disembark. ^{s47E(c)} of DAWE does not recall being asked for (oral) clearance for passengers to disembark. ² ^{s47E(c)} of Carnival gave evidence to NSW Inquiry that she obtained clearance for passengers to disembark from ABF and Agriculture. ³
6:30 – 7:00 approx	At around this time passengers began to disembark. As they disembarked, ABF officers collected Incoming Passenger Cards (IPC) and assisted DAWE officers in providing each passenger with a Commonwealth Health Fact Sheet advising passengers to self-isolate for 14 days from arrival at their home or accommodation. The ship also made on-board announcements that self-isolation period commenced upon arrival, not from last port. ⁴
07:31hrs	^{s47E(c)} of DAWE exchanges text messages with ^{s47E(c)} of NSW Health. ^{s47E(c)} confirmed all passengers can debark but all are to go into home isolation due to the new rules. ^{s47E(c)} confirmed they are handing out notice for isolation. ⁵
07:39	^{s47E(c)} of DAWE after leaving Ruby Princess for Overseas Passenger terminal enters data into MARS which results in a message being sent which includes a green light for 'Vessel Pratique'. The Commonwealth has submitted to the NSW Inquiry this was when formal pratique was granted. ^{s47E(c)} was unable to update MARS on board Ruby Princess due to a poor connection. The Inquiry found that pratique was so granted, at 7:39. ⁶
08:34 – 08:38	^{s47F} , the Carnival Port Agent, informs ^{s47E(c)} that "the test results had come back negative. (In context this must mean that the swabs taken from passengers and sent to a lab for COVID testing had tested negative to COVID, certainly that is what Officer ^{s47E(c)} understood.) Officer ^{s47E(c)} asked the port agent to send this information to him in writing. At 8:38 ^{s47F} sends an email to ^{s47E(c)} saying "Please see below patient list" and attaching a document entitled "Lab form for coronavirus testing from a cruise ship". The final

² NSW Inquiry report at 7.156

³ NSW Inquiry Report at 7.155

⁴ NSW Inquiry Report at 13.3

⁵ NSW Inquiry report at 7.157

⁶ NSW Inquiry Report at 7.157 – 7.158

	<p>column on that form indicated “A B Negative” results for “Rapid flu test result”. Officer ^{s47E(c)} was expecting this email, rapidly read it, and apparently misinterpreted it as indicating negative COVID results as expected, rather than negative flu tests results (which were done on board Ruby princess).</p> <p>This misinterpretation had no impact on the grant of pratique, and further that “neither the ABF nor any ABF officers played any part in the mishap”⁷ and to same effect with additional detail that the misinterpretation and consequent communication of incorrect information occurred more than one hour after disembarkation commenced, and that the plan of NSW Health was not predicated on the receipt of COVID-19 test results prior to disembarkation.⁸</p>
09:07	Officer ^{s47E(c)} sends an email to Officer ^{s47E(c)} indicating “advice received (see attached doctors report) from Port Agent re swab tests from isolated pax on Ruby Princess. All tests returned NEGATIVE.’
09:54	Officer ^{s47E(c)} sends further email to Officer ^{s47E(c)} , as an addition to the email chain, which includes a table Officer ^{s47E(c)} had compiled indicating the passengers that had tested negative.
10:05	Officer ^{s47E(c)} sends a similar email to Sydney Seaports address of DAWE, intending it for ^{s47E(c)} of DAWE. It seems ^{s47E(c)} takes no immediate action as a result of receiving this email.
10:00 – 11:00	During the period the disembarkation is complete, with the 11 isolated passengers coming off last. Officer ^{s47E(c)} recalls ^{s47F} stating in response a question regarding the remaining passengers disembarking “they are all negative”.
12:43	^{s47E(c)} of DAWE sends an email report to his superiors which includes the information he had received in the 1005 email from Officer Ozger.

After Disembarkation

On the morning of 20 March 2020 NSW Health is advised by the lab of some positive COVID-19 test results from the swabs.

(On 20 March 2020 the NSW Regional Commander, Danielle Yannopoulos, became aware of the misinterpretation of negative flu results for negative COVID results in an email chain that has been released under FOI and published in a 7:30 Report story.)

The process then commenced of contacting all passengers and advising them to get tested, and to remain in self-isolation for 14 days (as already advised to passengers). This was done by NSW Health and other state public health units, with the assistance of information provided by the Commonwealth. Commonwealth Health did not have direct contact with passengers during the contact tracing process.

⁷ NSW Inquiry Report at 1.47

⁸ NSW Inquiry Report at 7.168

The Inquiry Report states in footnote 13 page 247 that of the 2,647 Ruby passengers, 965 resided overseas and 727 resided outside NSW.⁵⁴²

Inquiry Report at 13.47 mentions that by 8.11pm on 22 March the ABF had notified NSW Health that a “do not fly” recommendation would be placed against all Ruby Princess passengers attempting to board flights, and that notification “was evidently too late to prevent a multitude of passengers boarding domestic and international flights.”

Note: (The ABF was informed that communications with passengers and any engagement with airlines would be undertaken by health agencies through contact tracing processes. When NSW Health on 22 March 2020 requested action to prevent persons boarding international aircraft ABF placed all Ruby Princess passengers and crew on alert. That meant no matter which airline they travelled with an alert would be raised if they attempted to travel. ABF considers this was preferable than providing Ruby Princess manifest just to Qantas.)

There was also a lengthy process of dealing with the Ruby Princess and the crew, many of whom were infected with COVID-19. The Ruby Princess left Port Kembla for Manila Bay on 23 April with some of the crew. Other crew were repatriated by flights. However, no questions have been raised about the process of dealing with the ship and crew.

Related documents

- **Key Brief** – CV-36 - NSW Special Commission of Inquiry - Ruby Princess – Commonwealth Engagement (SB20-000597).

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**Australian
BORDER FORCE**

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Thursday 24 September 2020

Brief No.	Topic	Responsible Area	PDMS No.
Dashboard			
1	Travel Exemptions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High profile cases QA processes Guidelines 	ABF – COVID-19 Border Measures	SB20-000475
2	Repatriation and Quarantine <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Howard Springs/ Christmas Island Arrangements – NCM/ our role Hotel involvement (Swissotel) Statistics (Caps and Quarantine) 	ABFO - Border Patrol and Coordination Command	SB20-000919
3	Engagement with Qantas and Other Airlines	ABFO - Border Patrol and Coordination Command	SB20-000920
4	ABF Timeline of Events	ABFS – Strategic Border Command	SB20-000477
5	Breakdown and total number of traveller arrivals and departures in Australia since pandemic declaration	ABFS – Strategic Border Command	SB20-000408
6	Australia New Zealand Travel Bubble	International Policy Division	SB20-000479
7	ABF PPE Holdings and advice provided to staff on PPE usage	ABFS – Operational Practices Command	SB20-000476

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Department of Home Affairs
Exemptions Outwards

BRIEF**Travel Exemption Requests****Key Statistics**

The below statistics are as at 17 September 2020, inclusive, noting that data prior to 1 August 2020 is collated manually from multiple systems.

Travel exemption requests received (a request may include more than one person)		
Outwards	131,273	
Inwards	123,112	
Outward travel exemption decisions		
Category	Approved ¹	Refused ²
Response to the COVID-19 Outbreak	397	75 ³
Critical industries and business	4,870	605
Urgent medical treatment	670	245
Urgent and unavoidable business	24,509	5,143
Compassionate and compelling grounds	18,919	10,756
National interest	141	18 ⁴
TOTALS	49,506	16,842
Otherwise finalised ⁵	64,484	
Total finalisations for outwards travel exemptions	130,832	
Inward travel exemptions decisions		
Category	Approved ⁶	Refused ⁷
Compassionate and compelling	3,853	9,917
Critical skills – Medical	961	33
Critical skills – other	6,037	761
Diplomatic	405	<5
Urgent Medical Treatment	178	27
Transit	7,777	9
TOTALS	19,211	10,748
Otherwise finalised ⁸	90,959	
Total finalisations for inwards travel exemptions	120,918	

¹ Figures do not include requests from those meeting an exempt category, withdrawn requests, or requests that did not contain sufficient information for referral to a decision maker

² Ibid

³ Requests refused generally failed to support their claims or an incorrect category was selected

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Otherwise finalised includes persons found to meet an already exempt category, withdrawn requests and those that did not contain sufficient information for referral to a decision maker

⁶ Figures do not include requests from those meeting an exempt category, withdrawn requests, or requests that did not contain sufficient information for referral to a decision maker

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Otherwise finalised includes persons found to meet an already exempt category, withdrawn requests and those that did not contain sufficient information for referral to a decision maker

The below table includes inwards exemption decisions made by the ABF Commissioner or decision makers between 1 August–17 September 2020, by top 10 passport nationalities and determination outcome.

Passport country	Exempt	Not Exempt
India	527	2902
United Kingdom	885	655
United States of America	558	535
China	279	560
New Zealand	477	328
South Africa	281	174
Pakistan	45	403
Canada	199	243
France	242	79
Nepal	42	273
Other	2,410	2,885
Total	5,945	9,037

Key Messages

- Australian citizens and permanent residents are automatically exempt from the inbound travel restrictions and can enter Australia without obtaining an individual exemption.
- All people entering Australia are however subject to quarantine arrangements managed by state and territory governments, which set caps for the number of arrivals they can receive.
- The ABF works with states and territories in coordinating international arrivals within the caps set by the states and territories.

Exemptions Policy

- Since 1 February 2020, the Government has progressively announced travel restrictions to curb the introduction and spread of COVID-19 in Australia.
- From 20 March 2020, travel restrictions have been in place prohibiting travel into Australia of all foreign nationals, unless they fall within certain exempt categories.
- From 25 March 2020, travel restrictions have been in place prohibiting Australian citizens and permanent residents from leaving Australia, unless they fall within certain exempt categories.
- The travel restrictions have been successful in slowing the spread of COVID-19 in Australia and were implemented on the advice of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC).

Exemptions Process

- The travel restriction exemption process has evolved from an emergency response in February and March 2020 to a high volume business process, with strong expectations from clients and key stakeholders about responsiveness and transparency.

- The Department and the ABF have made it easier to submit and track travel exemption requests with a new purpose-built service delivery platform available on the Department's website since 17 July 2020.
- The Travel Exemption Portal provides a range of benefits, including user-friendly functionality, immediate acknowledgement of requests, and immediate notification when a decision has been made.
- The vast majority of inwards requests are now decided within seven days, and outwards requests within 48 hours. For the week ending 18 September 2020:
 - 98.7 per cent of all inwards requests were finalised within 7 days, with an average processing time of less than three days. As at 17 September 2020, there were 2,194 inwards requests on hand.
 - 99.7 per cent of all outwards requests were finalised within 48 hours, with an average processing time of less than 24 hours. As at 17 September 2020, there were 441 outwards requests on hand.
- Decisions to grant exemptions to permit travel must be balanced against the Government's intent for imposing travel restrictions and the health risks posed to the Australian community.
- We are supporting economic recovery. A dedicated critical skills page for businesses supporting Australia's COVID-19 response, including economic recovery, went live on 24 July 2020 to assist industry with both visa applications and travel exemption requests.

Decision Making

- The ABF Commissioner has been authorised by the Prime Minister through the National Security Committee of Cabinet to consider requests for inwards travel on a case-by-case basis.
- The ABF Commissioner or ABF decision makers (APS 6 and above) may consider requests for travel on a case-by-case basis where there are compelling circumstances. Requests need to include sufficient evidence to support the request.
- The ABF Commissioner or his decision makers (APS 6 and above) consider individual inwards requests. Applicants must establish that they have a compelling or compassionate reason to travel to Australia.
- The ABF Commissioner personally makes decisions on inwards requests that are sensitive, unusual or novel in nature, or fall outside the guidelines for decision makers.
- On 17 September 2020, we published the *Commissioner's Inwards Decision making* statement, the *Commissioner's Guidelines* and two Operational Directives on the Department's website.

Aged Care Sector

- Since 20 March 2020 when the inwards travel restrictions were introduced, health care, including aged and disability care, have been included as critical sectors.

Staffing

- The processing of thousands of travel exemptions requests has required a sustained surge of hundreds of officers from across the organisation.

Quality assurance procedures

- Quality assurance reviews of decisions are being regularly undertaken to ensure decisions are made consistently.

- The Department uses existing centralised tools to enable a consistent approach to quality assurance checking.
- The Commissioner also regularly revises travel exemption guidelines as national and global circumstances in relation to the COVID-19 epidemic evolve.

If asked: what is the government doing to support Australian businesses?

- A dedicated critical skills page for businesses supporting Australia's COVID-19 response or economic recovery went live on 24 July 2020, which provides information about travel exemption categories and requirements for individuals in critical sectors or with critical skills.
- A specialised team has been stood up to manage the travel exemptions and visa applications from critical skills and critical sectors. Our dedicated industry engagement team is also responding to industry and business.
- Changes announced by the Government on 01 September 2020 introduced a Priority Migration Skilled Occupation List (PMSOL) based on advice from the National Skills Commission and other Commonwealth departments.
- While border restrictions remain in place, within the employer sponsored program, temporary visa holders working in one of the priority occupations will have their application for a travel exemption prioritised.

If asked: why were people like Tony Abbott and Tom Hanks granted exemptions, when many other people are denied travel for compelling and compassionate reasons?

- Mr Abbott was granted an exemption, as he was invited to appear as a witness before the Foreign Affairs Select Committee of the House of Commons into the UK's role in strengthening multilateral relationships.
- Mr Abbott's exemption was approved as a 'person who is travelling on official Government business' in his capacity as a former Prime Minister of Australia and in accordance with the guidelines.
- On 30 June 2020, the Queensland Chief Health Officer approved ^{s47F} [REDACTED] to quarantine at a premises arranged by ^{s47F} [REDACTED]. This email was forwarded to the ABF on 30 June 2020.
- On 3 July 2020, the ABF Commissioner approved the travel exemption request of ^{s47F} [REDACTED], noting the significant economic benefit. The request was accompanied by a letter of support from the ^{s47F} [REDACTED].
- Each travel exemption request is considered on an individual basis.

If asked: what is considered compelling and compassionate?

- On 17 September 2020, a number of guidance documents were published on the Department's website including examples of the sorts of circumstances that are generally considered to be compelling and compassionate.
- For example, the Commissioner and decision makers are generally approving:
 - Cases involving separation of minors from their family unit
 - Those seeking to attend a funeral of a close family member
 - Those seeking to visit a close family member who is seriously or critically ill or near the end of life

- The partner of a person who is in Australia (including Temporary visa holders) due to give birth.
- The ABF Commissioner and authorised decision makers assess whether compelling circumstances exist, by having regard to the specific circumstances of each case, including any supporting documents, and the current health advice about threats to public health. Decisions are made on a case-by-case basis.

Review of Split Families

- During the COVID-19 Senate Select Committee on 18 August 2020, the ABF Commissioner committed to review travel exemption decisions in the context of families on temporary visas who have been separated.
 - This review identified and granted an exemption to temporary visa holders who were offshore and have children who were living in Australia prior to the travel restrictions being imposed.
 - In cases where children are offshore, and one of their parents who is a temporary visa holder is in Australia, it is open to that parent to reunite with their family in their home country
- Immediate family members of Australian Citizens, Permanent Residents and usually resident New Zealand Citizens are exempt from inwards travel restrictions.

Why have holders of the Business Innovation and Investment (subclass 188) visa been given an automatic exemption?

- A range of visa holders are exempt from Australia's travel restrictions, including diplomats (holding a subclass 995 visa), maritime and air crew (holding a subclass 988 or relevant visa), travellers transiting Australia for less than 72 hours (holding a subclass 771 or relevant visa) and more recently, those recruited under Government approved Seasonal Worker Program or Pacific Labour Schemes (subclass 403 visa).
- The Business Innovation and Investment Program (BIIP) targets migrants who have a demonstrated history of success or talent in innovation, investment and business, and are able to make a significant contribution to the national innovation system and the Australian economy.
- The value of the BIIP to Australia's economic recovery is clear through its focus on:
 - Establishing and developing new and existing businesses
 - Commercialisation of products and services and establishing high value businesses and,
 - Investment and job creation in the Australian economy.

If asked: Why haven't Prospective Marriage (subclass 300) visa holders been given an automatic exemption, like other partner visa holders?

- Australia's travel restrictions do not apply to immediate family members of Australian citizens, Australian permanent residents, and New Zealand citizens usually resident in Australia. This includes, spouses, de facto partners, dependent children and legal guardians.
- Holders of Prospective Marriage (Subclass 300) visas are not necessarily deemed immediate family members and their requests are considered on a case-by-case basis. A person's intention to marry their fiancé is not sufficient, in and of itself, to satisfy the definition of de facto partner.

If asked: When will families where a child has been separated from one of their parents be allowed to return?

- Immediate family members of Australian Citizens, Permanent Residents and usually resident New Zealand Citizens are exempt from inwards travel restrictions.
- The Department utilises a range of strategies to manage programs and services, and make decisions in relation to children. These strategies are informed by Australia's domestic legal framework, including relevant state and territory legislation, as well as Australia's international obligations under the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Practice has been to approve travel by a parent or legal guardian (including temporary visa holders) of a minor, who is lawfully present and was usually resident in Australia before the commencement of travel restrictions.
- Australia's travel restrictions are subject to the advice of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) and are regularly reviewed.

If asked: For those whose applications are rejected, what assistance is Home Affairs and the ABF giving to people to assist them with their applications?

- The Department of Home Affairs and the ABF provides information on its website and through its service centre about the information and what should be supplied with a request.
- Applicants are advised that they can make a further request, and, where appropriate, provide additional information with any subsequent application.

If asked: under what authority can the ABF refuse to allow the departure of Australian citizens and Permanent Residents?

- Following the Prime Minister's announcement of the implementation of travel restrictions on 24 March 2020, at 23:54, the Minister for Health issued an interim order under the *Biosecurity Act 2015* (the Act), providing that no Australian citizen may leave Australia by air or sea as of 12:00 25 March 2020.
- At 11:44 on 25 March 2020, the Minister for Health issued the *Biosecurity (Human Biosecurity Emergency) (Human coronavirus with Pandemic Potential) (Overseas Travel Ban Emergency Requirements) Determination 2020* (the Overseas Travel Restrictions) to formalise the interim orders, along with exemptions.

If asked: when can Departmental staff, and not just ABF officers, make decisions on outwards exemptions?

- On 4 August, Government agreed that the *Biosecurity (Overseas Travel Ban Emergency Requirements) Determination* of 25 March 2020 be amended to expand decision making authority for outwards requests to include APS employees of the Department of Home Affairs who are made available to the ABF Commissioner.
 - The Minister for Health signed the amendment to the determination on 16 September 2020, giving effect to this expansion of decision making authority.

Consultation

Data Divison, Legal, Skilled and Family Visa Program

Attachments

A: Commissioner's Guidelines, Commissioner's Inwards Decision Making, Inwards Travel Restrictions Operation Directive, Outward Travel Restriction Operation Directive

B: Background to Australia's travel restrictions

Responsible Officer	Contact Officer
Justine Saunders, Deputy Commissioner Operations s47E(d)	s47E(c) A/g Assistant Secretary Border Measures COVID-19 Branch s47E(d)

BACK POCKET BRIEF

**Home Affairs Portfolio
Department of Home Affairs
Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 – September 2020**

BACK POCKET BRIEF

Topic: Background on Travel Exemptions

Group: Immigration and Settlement Services Group

Division: Immigration Programs Division

Key Messages

- Since 1 February 2020, the Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison MP, has progressively announced travel restrictions to curb the introduction and spread of COVID-19 in Australia.
- From 20 March 2020, travel restrictions have been in place prohibiting travel into Australia of all foreign nationals, unless exempt.
- From 25 March 2020, travel restrictions have been in place prohibiting Australian citizens and permanent residents from leaving Australia, unless exempt.

Outwards Exemptions

The travel restrictions for persons departing Australia do not apply to:

- temporary visa holders, however they will require an exemption to re-enter Australia
- an Australian citizen or Permanent Resident ordinarily resident in a country other than Australia
- airline and maritime crew and associated safety workers
- a New Zealand citizen holding a Special Category (subclass 444) visa
- a person engaged in the day-to-day conduct of inbound and outbound freight
- a person whose travel is associated with essential work at an Australian offshore facility, or
- a person who is travelling on official government business, including members of the Australian Defence Force

The ABF Commissioner or delegated decision makers will consider the following outwards requests on a discretionary basis:

- travel which is as part of the response to the COVID-19 outbreak, including the provision of aid
- travel which is essential for the conduct of critical industries and business (including export and import industries)
- travel to receive urgent medical treatment that is not available in Australia
- travel for urgent and unavoidable personal business
- travel in the national interest
- travel for compassionate or humanitarian grounds, including:
 - attending the funeral of an immediate family member (parent, child, sibling, spouse)

- travelling due to critical or serious illness of an immediate family member (parent, child, sibling, spouse)
- travelling for necessary medical treatment not available in Australia
- need to pick up a minor child (adoption, surrogacy, court order etc) and return to Australia with that child
- intend to commence or continue education overseas, where education period is more than six months
- intend to complete an existing work contract - FIFOs and individuals with a work contract
- travelling to an Australian territory which is outside migration zone (including Antarctica, Norfolk Island, Christmas Island, Lord Howe etc)
- intending to remain overseas for at least three months

Inwards Exemptions

The travel restrictions for coming to Australia do not apply to people who are:

- an Australian citizen or a permanent resident of Australia
- an immediate family member of an Australian citizen or permanent resident
- a New Zealand citizen usually resident in Australia and their immediate family members
- a diplomat accredited to Australia (holding a subclass 995 visa) (effective 11 July 2020)
- a traveller transiting Australia for 72 hours or less (effective 11 July 2020)
- airline crew
- maritime crew including marine pilots
- recruited under the Government approved Seasonal Worker Program or Pacific Labour Scheme
- holders of a Business Innovation and Investment (subclass 188) visa.

The ABF Commissioner or authorised decision makers will consider the following inwards requests on a discretionary basis:

- a person travelling at the invitation of the Australian Government or a state or territory government authority for the purpose of assisting in the COVID-19 response
- a person providing critical or specialist medical services, including air ambulance, medical evacuations and delivering critical medical supplies
- a person with critical skills required to maintain the supply of essential goods and services (such as in medical technology, critical infrastructure, telecommunications, engineering and mining, supply chain logistics, aged care, agriculture, primary industry, food production, and the maritime industry)
- a person delivering services in sectors critical to Australia's economic recovery (such as financial technology, large scale manufacturing, film and television production and emerging technology), where no Australian worker is available
- providing critical skills in religious or theology fields
- sponsored by your employer to work in Australia in an occupation on the [Priority Migration Skilled Occupation List \(PMSOL\)](#)
- a person whose entry would otherwise be in the national interest, supported by the Australian Government or a state or territory government authority
- military personnel, including those who form part of the Status of Forces Agreement, Commonwealth Armed Forces and Asia Pacific Forces

- a student completing year 11 and 12, with support from the relevant state or territory government
- travel for compassionate and compelling reasons, including:
 - minors being reunited with parents
 - funerals of close family members or visiting critically ill relatives
 - partner of a person who is in the third trimester of pregnancy.

Department of Home Affairs
Repatriation and Quarantine

BRIEF**Repatriation and Quarantine****Key Messages**

- Australian citizens and permanent residents are automatically exempt from the travel restrictions and can enter Australia without obtaining an individual exemption.
- All people entering Australia are however subject to quarantine arrangements managed by state and territory governments, which set caps for the number of arrivals they can receive.
- The ABF works with states and territories in coordinating international arrivals within the caps set by the states and territories.
- In the past the ABF at the direction of government has worked alongside Commonwealth and state and territory partners to facilitate the repatriation and quarantine of Australian citizens and permanent residents in emergency situations.
 - For example, in late January the Government decided to use our facilities on Christmas Island to quarantine citizens and permanent residents returning from Wuhan. The ABF assisted the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment to manage quarantine arrangements.
 - Also, following a decision by Government on 7 February, the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory cooperated to operate quarantine facilities at Howard Springs.

“If asked”:***Whose responsibility is it repatriate citizens and to manage quarantine?***

- The ABF’s primary role is to administer the Migration Act and the Customs Act.
- The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade would normally lead on the repatriation of citizens and permanent residents.
- The Biosecurity Act is administered by the Department of Health in respect to human health and the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment in relation to animals and plants.
- The quarantine health measures implemented in response to COVID-19, including the requirement that has been in place since 28 March 2020 for 14 days’ quarantine on arrival, are given effect through state and territory legislation.
- State and Territory frameworks enable them to quarantine and enforce jurisdictions.

Has the Government the ABF to provide repatriation and quarantine facilities?

- s47C

- The ABF stands ready to assist if directed by Government.

Key Statistics

Passenger arrivals into Australia 2359 2359 28MAR20 – 2300 20SEP20								
Handling Type	NSW	Vic.	Qld	WA	SA	NT	ACT	Totals by Type
Cumulative totals for passenger arrivals into Australia 2359 28MAR20 – 2300 20SEP20								
Total Flights Commercial and Charter**	1,892	348	843	409	52	309	s47F	s47F
PAX Transferred to Quarantine	55,761	19,898	16,184	11,328	3,259	867	503	
PAX Transferred to Hospital	400	19	47	20	s47F	17	s47F	
PAX Exemptions	2,068	1,904	1,097	2,257		1,103	12	
Total PAX By State	58,229	21,821	17,328	13,605	3,261	1,987	516	

*This data is manually collected for mandatory quarantine reporting purposes. These figures will differ from TRIPS data.

** Total flight numbers are not included in 'Total PAX by State' cumulative totals.

***A more comprehensive table can be found at [Attachment A](#).

Key Talking Points

- Since 25 March 2020, the ABF has facilitated the inbound charter return of over **19,627** Australian citizens, permanent residents, immediate family members of an Australian citizen or permanent resident and New Zealand citizens who usually reside in Australia.
- As of 20 September 2020, this has culminated in **233** inbound repatriation flights from more than **38** countries. In addition the ABF has facilitated the safe arrival into Australia, on onward international transit of over **3,020** travellers through Government assisted flights.
- Passengers have arrived from **39** countries since March 2020. With the majority coming from India (over 6,000), Indonesia (over 2,000), the Philippines (over 1,800), Chile (over 1,200), and over 900 from Thailand.
- The Australian Border Force (ABF) is responsible for operationalising the customs and immigration clearance components of the enhanced border measures at all international air and sea ports.
- The ABF has worked in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, Department of Health, including State and Territory Health Departments, to support whole of government implementation including health screening of traveller passengers at the border.
- The ABF is working with a variety of stakeholders to ensure passengers are travelling under the mandated passenger cap restrictions, have the relevant exemptions to travel and are quarantining accordingly. Roles and responsibilities of each agency is at [Attachment B](#).
- The progressive travel restrictions were implemented as per below:

Date	Travel Restriction
1 February 2020 from 2100 AEDST	Any foreign national arriving in Australia who had left or transited through China was restricted from entering Australia for 14 days from the time they had left or transited through China.
1 March and 5 March 2020	The Government extended the restrictions to foreign nationals arriving from Iran and the Republic of Korea. This included enhanced health screening and temperature testing for those arriving from Italy.
11 March 2020 from 1800 AEDST	Any foreign national arriving in Australia who had left or transited through Italy was restricted from entering Australia for 14 days from the time they had left or transited through Italy.
15 March 2020	Measures to support country specific travel restrictions were implemented, including the requirement for all arrivals to self-isolate for 14 days.
20 March 2020 from 2100 AEDST	A travel ban was implemented all foreign nationals entering Australia.
23 March 2020	The Prime Minister agreed to extend the 72 hours window referred to for travellers transiting from New Zealand to other destinations. The window concluded 26 March 2020.
25 March 2020	A ban on the departures of all Australians and permanent residents by sea or air was implemented under the <i>Biosecurity Act 2015</i> for an initial period of 4 weeks.
29 March 2020	Mandatory quarantine period of 14 days at the port of arrival was implemented all passengers arriving in Australia.
30 June 2020	Melbourne International Airport closed to inbound international passenger, commercial, repatriation and charter flights for a period of two weeks.
04 July 2020	All international flights into Sydney capped at 50 passengers for the next two weeks. Total international passenger arrivals into Sydney not to exceed 450 passengers or 50 passengers per flight daily.
13 July 2020	A passenger cap for international passenger arrivals into Australia was implemented, to support Australian States and Territories in managing their quarantine capacity.
07 August 2020	National Cabinet agreed that existing caps on international arrivals into Australia would continue in order to manage and maintain quarantine arrangements across jurisdictions, and would remain in place until 24 October 2020.
18 September 2020	National Cabinet agreed to increase the passenger caps in a staggered approach, to allow each state to organise additional quarantine arrangements. This is to assist Australians in getting home.

Quarantine:

- On 28 March 2020 at 2359 AEDT, the Australian Government's mandatory quarantine of all incoming passengers arriving into Australia came into effect.
- Quarantining of arriving passengers is led by State and Territory Governments with enforcement through State and Territory police, including support from the Australian Defence Force and Commonwealth law enforcement agencies.
- Quarantine takes place immediately in the State or Territory of arrival, and passengers are not permitted to transit home (with limited exemptions).
 - The location of quarantine is a hotel or other designated accommodation as determined by State or Territory Governments.

Passenger caps:

- On 30 June 2020, Melbourne International Airport closed to inbound passengers for an initial two week period.
- As result of the introduction of State and Territory quarantine requirements for domestic interstate travel the availability of quarantine for Australians returning from overseas was significantly reduced.
- Due to the increased influx resulting from Melbourne International Airport closing, Sydney International Airport capped flights at 50 passengers on 04 July 2020.
- On 10 July 2020, the Australian Prime Minister announced the establishment of a national framework for managing international passenger arrivals into Australia beginning from 13 July 2020. This framework involved the implementation of passenger caps on arriving passengers at Australian Airports and was implemented to support Australian States and Territories in managing their quarantine capacity.
- These caps were reviewed and will be increased in a staggered approach over the following weeks. The passenger cap framework will remain in effect until 24 October 2020.
- On 13 July 2020, overall passenger caps were implemented for Australia to support States and Territories in managing their quarantine capacity. On 07 August 2020, National Cabinet agreed to extend the passenger caps with until 24 October 2020.
- On 18 September 2020, National Cabinet agreed to increase the passenger caps in a staggered approach, to allow each state to organise additional quarantine arrangements. This is to assist Australians in getting home.

Cities:	Cap as of 07AUG (per week)	Cap as of 28SEP (per week)	Cap as of 05OCT (per week)	Cap as of 12OCT (per week)
Sydney	2,450	2,940	2,940	2,940
Perth	525	725	725	1,025
Brisbane	500	700	1,000	1,000
Adelaide	500	600	600	600
Melbourne	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Total:	3,975	4,965	5,265	5,565

**All other cities with international airports will be managed on a case-by-case basis.*

- The implementation and management of passenger caps is co-ordinated by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications.

Returning Australian Citizens and Permanent Residents

- The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has the lead in supporting Australians offshore in getting back home. DFAT has placed a liaison officer in the ABF Incident Coordination Centre to undertake joint planning.
- The ABF is the Home Affairs Portfolio operational lead to support the Australian Government's repatriation of Australian Citizens.
- ABF has been leading the coordination efforts across Government to plan border entry and reception of passengers, with once daily meetings held with Commonwealth agencies and distribution of flight and passenger information to all jurisdictions once a day.
- ABF works with State and Territory agencies in each jurisdiction for local reception planning and transfer to quarantine facilities.
- The National Coordination Mechanism supports the operational agencies in any elevated planning and decision-making required across states and territories; for example for high risk and high volume flights.
- Repatriated citizens into Australia are observing the mandatory quarantine period of 14 days—consistent with Australian Government requirements. In order to manage the flow of inbound travel so as not to overwhelm current State and Territory quarantine capacity the NCM, supported by ABF, has been working with Federal and State agencies to manage when and where flights will arrive.
- The ABF Commissioner has the power to grant exemptions to the travel ban for foreign nationals on board chartered repatriation flights arriving or transiting through Australia. ABF, the Department of Home Affairs, and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) are working closely together to ensure these exemptions are processed seamlessly.
- From an operational perspective, State health authorities are conducting health screening on repatriated citizens upon arrival. Those presenting with symptoms are being referred for further testing. ABF is working with state health authorities who are present for the arrival of flights to conduct screening. The ABF airport operations teams are also liaising closely with airport operators, airlines, and state and federal authorities to ensure these charter flights are processed with minimal delay.
- The ABF also acts as the central point of coordination for the planning and approval of charter flights returning Australians into, and foreign nationals out of Australia. The ABF leads daily interdepartmental meetings to ensure whole-of-government requirements for charter flight are met seamlessly and in a coordinated way.

Beirut Cohort

- The ABF have worked with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Department of Infrastructure to assist vulnerable Australian citizens, permanent residents and their immediate family members, who were affected by the recent blast in Beirut.
- NSW state authorities agreed to support the vulnerable passengers return to Australia, above the passenger cap, for a two-week period from 19AUG- 02SEP20. During this period, over 500 passengers arrived from Beirut. Approximately, 280 of these were registered with DFAT.

Coordination methods:

- The ABF has established liaison points in DFAT, Department of Infrastructure and the Department of Health to support implementation of Australian Government travel measures and facilitate the planning of repatriation flights.
- The ABF coordinate and participate in, a variety of meetings which assist all stakeholders in ensuring travel is conducted within the requirements of the Commonwealth, and the States/Territories. The meets are as follows:
 - Repatriation Flight Tracker Sync
Once daily at 0900hrs Monday – Friday
Prior to CAP restrictions twice daily at 0900hrs and 1700hrs 7 days a week.
Stakeholders: ABF OPBANDORA Chair – ABF Health LO, ABF DFAT LO, DFAT, Infrastructure, AMS, CASA, Border Measures (ISSG).
 - National Coordination Mechanism – Managing Returns to Australia Working Group
Once weekly Tuesday at 1000hrs
Previously this meeting was held twice weekly, Tuesday and Friday’s 1000hrs
Stakeholders: ABF OPBANDORA OP COMMAND Chair, ABF Health LO, ABF Regional Commands, State and Territory Health Authorities, DFAT, Infrastructure, AMS, CASA, Border Measures (ISSG).
 - National Coordination Mechanism – Band 3 – Managing International Arrivals
Adhoc – as required
Previously this meeting was held twice weekly
Stakeholders: Home Affairs/ABF Band 3 Chair, Health, Infrastructure, DFAT, State and Territory Health Authorities, AMS.
 - National Incident Response Division Daily Stand-Up
Twice weekly at 0930 Tuesday’s and Thursdays
Monday, Wednesday and Friday by exception 0930hrs
Previously the morning stand-up was held five days a week Monday – Friday
Stakeholders: Department of Health FAS – Celia Street - Chair, ABF Health LO, DFAT DLO, ADF, PM&C, Department of Agriculture.
- Other meetings are held as required to coordinate other planning, such as the Seasonal Workers Pilot Program Working Group and the Students Pilot Program Working Group.

“If asked – ABF support to planning the Return of Australian’s”

- Significant planning is undertaken to support the return of travellers. On the introduction of passenger restrictions the ABF has lead the response from a border measures perspective through three levels of planning and engagement.
 - i. ABF and DFAT plan returns ahead of the border with:
 - Commonwealth forum chaired by the ABF to review the “repatriation flight tracker” once daily. This meeting is a Whole of Government meeting that is attended by ABF, DFAT, Department of Infrastructure, CASA, Department of Agriculture, AMS, to support the repatriation of Australians/permanent residents through Government repatriation flights, Private Charters and some commercial aircraft. This forum confirms that all flights have the appropriate permissions to land in Australia while ensuring reception plans at Airports are in place to facilitate passenger arrivals
 - NCM Working Group – ABF chairs conversations and decisions across the Commonwealth, States and Territory agencies. Similar to the Op Bandora repatriation meeting this forum supports the return of Australians and ensures that States and Territories (including Health, Police and Premiers Office) are engaged in the planning process, including managing mandatory quarantining numbers.
 - ii. Sharing of information – Expected flight arrival information, including passenger numbers is provided to all key stakeholders. This includes Government and private charter repatriation flights, 24 hours arrival forecast for all International Airports and tracker of all commercial flight in Australia for the upcoming two week period.
 - iii. At border reception planning – All Regions have mature reception planning processes in place with all key partner agencies. All meetings have evolved throughout the year in terms of frequency, however still remain highly collaborative and effective working relationships. Whilst Victoria currently does not have international travellers, their processes have been well attended and effective.

“If asked – ABF role at International Airports”

- The ABF continues to manage arrivals at the border in addition to enhanced border screening by Biosecurity and Health officials.
 - Upon arrival in Australia, the ABF provides a form for travellers to complete confirming their understanding to complete their mandatory quarantine in a designated location. Travellers will disembark, collect their luggage and undertake the normal border clearance process (customs, immigration and biosecurity).
- The ABF is marshalling passengers earlier in the arrivals process to prevent congestion, including visual floor markings to support enforced social distancing requirements.

- The ABF is working with DFAT to ensure flights are coming into varied international airports across Australia.
- The ABF is further working with airports to stagger aircraft docking and disembarking to prevent congestion.
- The ABF has updated, distributed and uploaded traveller factsheets on the Department of Home Affairs COVID-19 website.
 - DFAT refer to these for hotline enquiries.
 - Additional factsheets and communications have been distributed to airlines and airport operators for their information and/or distribution to passengers.



Industry Engagement

- Industry is supporting the ABF in implementing the new border restrictions. Industry's willingness to engage and share information early has assisted ABF to stand up new arrangements in short timeframes. Aviation and maritime peak bodies have been an important part of our communication network, supporting the distribution of information to offshore carriers, agents and companies.
- The ABF provided regular fact sheets to industry upon each travel restriction announcement. These were implemented to support industry navigate the travel restrictions implemented and exemptions that were applicable.

Attachments:

Attachment A - Arrivals and Cap Utilisation

Attachment B -

Responsible Officer	Contact Officer
Justine Saunders Deputy Commissioner Operations Group s47E(d) 	Tim Fitzgerald Assistant Commissioner, Border Protection and Coordination Command s47E(d) 

Department of Home Affairs
Engagement with Qantas and Other Airlines

BRIEF**Engagement with Qantas and other Airlines**

- The Ruby Princess cruise left Sydney port on 8 March 2020 for an originally planned 13 night cruise to New Zealand. This was cut short and the vessel returned to Sydney on 19 March after the Government announced bans on vessels.
- **21 March 2020,**
 - The ABF had been made aware that Qantas had engaged Department of Health for information about Ruby Princess passengers and Department of Health would lead response.
 - ABF was informed that NSW and Commonwealth Health had the manifest information for contact tracing and would engage airlines as necessary.
 - ABF was contacted by Qantas via email at 5:08pm 21 March 2020 asking about passenger authority to travel.
 - The ABF advised Qantas that the Department of Health was leading the response on the Ruby Princess passengers departing Australia on commercial aircraft and they should continue to engage with Health.
- **22 March 2020:**
 - NSW Health sought ABF assistance to prevent boarding of Ruby Princess passengers on international flights out of Australia.
 - To assist in this response ABF placed all Ruby Princess passengers and crew on an alert system so that if a person attempted to board an outwards international flight the airline would be notified.

What did the DAL alert say?

- “DAL listing is in response to Australian Government announcement regarding coronavirus enhanced border security measures to ensure health safety and wellbeing of the Australian community. ^{s47F} [REDACTED] was listed as being on board the Ruby Princess which has confirmed cases of COVID-19 and therefore they have been informed by Health they must complete a 14 day self-isolation period ending 03APR20 before departing Australia. This information is provided for the airline's information to enable them to decide whether to provide uplift to the traveller”.

How many passengers departed Australia before DAL alerts were put in place?

- All DALs were in place 8:25pm 22MAR20, prior to the DALs being created, 935 of 3,795 persons departed Australia from the Ruby Princess.
- 632 DAL alerts activated on departure.
- **23 March 2020**, at 1:13pm Qantas requested via email, the Ruby Princess Manifest.
 - Qantas was advised that all passengers that had disembarked the Ruby Princess had been placed on an alert list.
- **26 March 2020**, ABF confirmed with Qantas, Document Alerts for Ruby Princess passengers were active. ABF also confirmed this would only continue to be done for passengers off cruise ships with confirmed COVID cases.

If asked – why did ABF not release the manifest to airlines?

- The ABF was informed that communications with passengers was being undertaken by health agencies and that any engagement with airlines would be undertaken by health agencies through contact tracing processes.
- On request by NSW Health on 22 March 2020, the ABF used alternative means to effect the request to prevent boarding on international flights, which was placing them on alert.
- This meant any person no matter which airline they travelled would have an alert raised if they attempted to travel.
- In less than 12 hours, ABF had uploaded 3,795 document alerts for pax and crew.
- In our view this was a preferable action than providing the entire Ruby Princess manifest just to Qantas because all airlines no .

Why can't ABF prevent travel – why is this a commercial decision?

- Not uplifting a passenger is an airline decision. Document alerts are a recommendation from the ABF to the airline as to whether or not a passenger should be processed either because they are not legitimate travellers or pose a travel risk.
- ABF has no legislative basis to prevent someone from traveling unless there is an order in place directing 'No travel to (or from) Australia'.
- NSW authorities had not briefed ABF on the application of the Public Health Order to international travel. ABF was not aware of the Public Health Order and how it may or may not apply to our functions or communications for international travellers.

What other Airlines did ABF have engagement with?

- Neither the ABF nor the Department were approached by any other airline regarding the Ruby Princess.

Timeline

Date	Comments
21MAR	Late afternoon: Dept of Health contacted ABF to advise that Qantas was seeking a manifest and that health agencies were contacting passengers from Ruby Princess and would engage airlines as needed 17:08 Qantas emailed ABF seeking advice. Qantas was advised that Department of Health had the manifest and was leading response
22MAR	12:03 – Department of Health provides the manifest to ABF for document alerts 13:00 – ABF contacts NSW Health to discuss. The request is verified to be: NSW Health want to stop the overseas passengers from travelling home principally via Qantas to LA. 15:00 – internal meeting to identify a strategy to prevent the departure of Ruby Princess passengers from Australia due to concerns raised by the airline industry. 16:40 - Email sent seeking approval from Assistant Commissioners as the delegate to list Australian Citizens, and DAL narratives for Australian Citizens and foreign nationals. 16:58 – Assistant Commissioner approval received for DAL listings to occur (including Aus Citizens) upon confirmation of legal advice on ability to use it for foreign and Australian nationals. 20:19 – Manifests loaded into alert system. 20:25 – DAL Bulk load of 3,795 (passengers and crew) documents was completed.
23MAR	Telephone conversation between Qantas and ABF. Qantas was advised that all pax on Document Alert List

Responsible Officer	Contact Officer
Justine Saunders Deputy Commissioner Operations Group s47E(d)	Tim Fitzgerald Assistant Commissioner, Border Protection and Coordination Command s47E(d)

Department of Home Affairs
Overall timeline of events

BRIEF

Overall Timeline of Events

The below timeline of events outlines the measures implemented to ease the spread of COVID-19:

Effective 25 January 2020 – Incident Control Centre

The Australian Border Force (ABF) established an Incident Control Centre (ICC) following the first confirmed case in Australia of COVID-19.

Effective 29 January 2020 – Incident Control Centre

The Australian Government extended an offer of assistance to 670 Australian citizens affected in Wuhan, China to be repatriated and quarantined in Australia due to the outbreak of Coronavirus. The Northwest Point facility on Christmas Island is identified and the ABF assists the Department of Agriculture (DoA) in preparing this as a quarantine facility.

Effective 31 January 2020 – North West Point Quarantine Facility

The ABF deployed staff to Christmas Island to assist in the facilitation of repatriated Australian citizens and permanent residents from Wuhan, China. The Quarantine Facility was decommissioned on 19 March 2020.

Effective 1 February 2020 (2100AEDT) – Travel restrictions for China

Foreign nationals in China on or after 1 February 2020 were prohibited from entering Australia for 14 days from the time they left or transited through China. This restriction remains in place.

Effective 4 February 2020 – Repatriation flight

Passengers from the first assisted departure Qantas flight from Wuhan arrive at the quarantine facilities on Christmas Island.

Effective 7 February 2020 – Repatriation of Australians from China and Japan

The Government decided to utilise the Howard Springs Quarantine Facility (HSQF) in the Northern Territory. The ABF deployed staff to assist in the facilitation of repatriated Australian citizens and permanent residents from Wuhan, China, and the *Diamond Princess* cruise ship in Japan.

Effective 1 March 2020 (0000 AEDT) – Travel restrictions for Iran

Foreign nationals in Iran on or after 1 March 2020 were prohibited from entering Australia for 14 days from the time they left or transited through Iran.

Effective 5 March 2020 (2100 AEDT) – Travel restrictions for Korea

Foreign nationals in the Republic of Korea on or after 5 March 2020 were prohibited from entering Australia for 14 days from the time they left or transited through the Republic of Korea.

Effective 11 March 2020 (1800 AEDT) – Travel restrictions for Italy

Foreign nationals in Italy on or after 11 March 2020 were prohibited from entering Australia for 14 days from the time they have left or transited through Italy.

Effective 16 March 2020 (0000 AEDT) – Self isolation

All travellers arriving in Australia, including exempt travellers, were required to self-isolate for 14 days from the time of arrival in Australia.

Effective 16 March 2020 (0001 AEDT) – Initial cruise ship ban

All cruise ship arrivals were prohibited for an initial period of 30 days with no new cruises allowed to commence. The ban excluded Australian flagged vessels; cruise ships returning to Australia; cruise ships in transit which had left their last international port by midnight 16 March 2020; and ships already in domestic waters and round trip cruises.

Effective 18 March 2020 – Declared a human biosecurity emergency

On 18 March 2020, the Governor-General, on advice from the Minister for Health, declared a human biosecurity emergency in relation to the listed human disease, 'human coronavirus with pandemic potential'—COVID-19.

Effective 20 March 2020 (2100 AEDT) – Inbound travel ban

Temporary visa holders were prohibited from entering Australia after 2100 AEDT 20 March 2020. Automatic exemptions were put in place for airline and maritime crew and persons engaging in inbound and outbound freight to ensure the flow of critical supplies and services.

The ABF Commissioner began to assess requests from temporary visa holders seeking an exemption to travel to Australia for a compelling or compassionate circumstance.

Effective 25 March 2020 (1200 AEDT) – Outbound travel ban

By a direction from the Minister for Health, under section 477(1) of the *Biosecurity Act 2015*, Australian citizens and Australian permanent residents were prohibited from leaving Australia by sea or air, with limited exemptions. The ABF Commissioner commenced assessing requests from Australian citizens and permanent residents to depart Australia for a compelling or compassionate circumstance.

As inbound and outbound travel restrictions came into force, the ABF, as the Home Affairs Portfolio's operational lead, began assisting the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to facilitate repatriation flights for Australians to return home, and foreign nationals to return to their home countries.

Effective 25 March 2020 – Repatriation to and from Australia

The ABF with the Department of Home Affairs and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade commenced repatriation to Australia of Australian citizens and permanent residents, immediate family members of Australian citizens or permanent residents, and New Zealand citizens who usually reside in Australia. In addition to facilitating the repatriation of foreign nationals to their home country.

Effective 26 Mar 2020 - Screening requirement for Australians

Biosecurity (Exit Requirements) Determination 2020 required persons leaving Australia from certain Australian airports to be screened for COVID-19 if travelling to the Cook Islands, Fiji, Nauru, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga and Vanuatu.

Effective 27 March 2020 – Cruise ship ban extended

The Government extended the prohibition on all cruise ship arrivals by two months (to 15 June 2020). The Minister for Health determined, under section 477(1) of the *Biosecurity Act 2015*, that the operator of foreign flagged cruise ships that were in Australian territory must cause the ship to leave Australian territory as soon as reasonably practicable. All 28 vessels in Australia at that time have since departed, with the last having left on 28 April 2020.

Effective 28 March 2020 (2359 AEDT) – Quarantine arrangements

All passengers who arrive in Australia will be quarantined in a hotel or other designated accommodation (with limited exemptions) as determined by state and territory governments for 14 days at their port of arrival, no on-travel is permitted.

Effective 29 March 2020 – Direction for foreign-flagged cruise ships to leave

The ABF Commissioner wrote to all remaining foreign-flagged vessels asking them to leave. A number of these cruise ships lodged a formal request for exemption that were later rejected by the Commissioner as the presence of the vessels remained a risk to the spread of COVID-19 in Australia.

Effective 30 March 2020 – PPE export restrictions

The ABF amended the *Customs (Prohibited Exports) Regulations 1958* to prohibit temporarily the export of prescribed protective gear and disinfectants ('essential goods'). The Regulation also allows the ABF to seize, forfeit and dispose of essential goods under the *Customs Act 1901* from 30 March 2020. The ABF designed this temporary control to enable legitimate commercial trade and humanitarian consignments to continue.

Effective 4 April 2020 - Further direction for foreign-flagged cruise ships to leave

The ABF Commissioner further directed all foreign cruise ships to leave Australian waters.

Effective 20 April 2020 – Outbound travel ban extended

The Government extended restrictions on international departures by Australian citizens and permanent residents for a further four weeks until 20 May 2020.

Effective 1 May 2020 – Temporary duty free on PPE imports

On May 1, the ABF created tariff concessional item 57 which provides temporary duty free entry for imports of certain medical products or hygiene products, capable of use in combating the novel coronavirus that causes Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The concession is in effect for qualifying goods from 1 February until 31 July.

Effective 5 May 2020 – Trans Tasman COVID-safe travel zone

Following a National Cabinet meeting on 5 May 2020, Prime Ministers Morrison and Ardern announced plans to introduce a trans-Tasman COVID-safe travel zone. Australian and New Zealand officials began talks in mid-June to progress arrangements for the Zone.

Effective 11 May 2020 – Human biosecurity emergency period extended, NSC

The NSC of Cabinet agreed in principle, that the human biosecurity emergency period be extended for an additional three (3) months, ending on 17 September 2020. The NSC also agreed to extend restrictions on:

- All cruise ship arrivals by three (3) months to 17 September 2020.
- Outgoing travel by one (1) month to be reviewed on 17 June 2020.
- Foreign nationals transiting Australian airports where their onward flight is confirmed at the time of uplift and that they do not leave the Australian airport.

Effective 15 May 2020 – Human biosecurity emergency period extended, Governor-General

The Governor-General extended the human biosecurity emergency period from 17 June 2020 to 17 September 2020.

Effective 20 May 2020 - Cruise ship ban extended

The Minister of Health agreed to the extension of the cruise ship ban by a further 3 months (to 17 September 2020).

Effective 26 June 2020 – Hotel Quarantine

National Cabinet confirmed that the current hotel quarantine arrangements remain in place. In addition, National Cabinet agreed that further testing will be conducted for all those in hotel quarantine, including within the first 48 hours in quarantine and then on day 10-12 of quarantine.

Effective 30 June 2020 – Closure of Melbourne International Airport

The Victorian Premier recommended on the basis it is in the public interest, the Commonwealth Government facilitate the closure of Victoria to all inbound international passenger flights. On 7 August 2020 the restriction was extended until at least 24 October

Effective 10 July 2020 – Cap on returning international travellers

Following the National Cabinet, the Prime Minister announced the introduction of passenger caps for international flights coming into all states and territories. On 7 August 2020 the caps were extended until at least 24 October 2020. Restrictions on outbound travel by Australian citizens and permanent residents remain in place, in accordance with the health advice to the Government.

Effective 11 July 2020 – Transit travellers and Diplomatic visa holders

The ABF Commissioner directed that all foreign nationals transiting Australian airports for a period of 72 hours or less were exempt from Australia's travel restrictions for this purpose. The ABF Commissioner also directed that all diplomats accredited to Australia, and their immediate family members, holding Diplomatic (subclass 995) visas were exempt from Australia's travel restrictions.

Effective 7 August 2020 – Cap on returning international travellers to continue

The National Cabinet agreed that existing caps on international passenger arrivals would continue in order to manage and maintain quarantine arrangements across jurisdictions. Restrictions on outbound travel by Australian citizens and permanent residents would also remain in place, in accordance with the health advice to the Government.

Effective 3 September 2020 - Cruise ship ban extended

The Australian Government has announced it will extend the human biosecurity emergency period under the *Biosecurity Act 2015* by an additional three months. The emergency period, which has been in place since 18 March 2020, will now be in place until 17 December 2020.

Released by Department of Home Affairs
under the Freedom of Information Act 1982

Effective 18 September 2020 – Cap on returning international travellers to be increased

The Australian Government has announced an increase in the ‘cap’ on the number of international arrivals by 2,000 per week (up to 6,000 in total). This increase will be staged to allow state governments time to increase quarantine capability. The staged approach will include gradual increases across NSW, Queensland and Western Australia on 27 September, 4 October and 11 October.

Responsible Officer	Contact Officer
Sarah Nicolson Commander, Strategic Border Command s47E(d)	s47E(c) Superintendent, Strategic Border Command s47E(d)

Department of Home Affairs
Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Breakdown and Total Number of Traveller Arrivals and Departures from Australian since the
Pandemic Declaration

BRIEF

**Breakdown and Total Number of Traveller Arrivals into Australia since
Pandemic Declaration**

Key Statistics

- From 11 March 2020 until 20 September 2020 a total of 894,851 travellers have arrived in Australia via air and sea.
 - 677,628 travellers arrived via air
 - 217,223 travellers arrived by sea
- Total Air and Sea Arrivals:

Date	Citizens	Permanent Residents	Foreigners	Crew	Total
11 March 2020 – 20 September 2020	372,489	52,286	198,872	271,204	894,851

- Total Air Arrivals:

Date	Citizens	Permanent Residents	Foreigners	Crew	Total
11 March 2020 – 20 September 2020	368,724	52,157	188,039	68,708	677,628

- Total Sea Arrivals (excludes round trip cruise data):

Date	Citizens	Permanent Residents	Foreigners	Crew	Total
11 March 2020 – 20 September 2020	3,765	129	10,833	202,496	217,223

Key Talking Points

- The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the COVID-19 virus a global pandemic on 11 March 2020.
- From 11 March 2020 until 20 September 2020 air and sea arrivals consisted of:
 - 372,489 Australian citizens (42% of arrivals)
 - 52,286 permanent residents (6% of arrivals)
 - 198,872 foreign nationals (22% of arrivals)
 - 271,204 Air or Sea Crew (30% of arrivals)

Australian Citizen's urged to return home – 15 March 2020

- On 15 March 2020 the Australian Government urged all Australian's overseas to return to Australia as soon as possible by commercial means.
- Following this announcement large numbers of Australian citizens returned to Australia:
 - In the four days prior to the travel advice Australian citizen arrivals by air averaged approximately 17,500 passengers per day.
 - In the four days after the travel advice Australian citizen arrivals by air averaged approximately 21,400 passengers per day. This represents an increase of approximately 18% in arrivals of Australian citizens over the previous four days.
- These arrivals figures continued to steadily decrease and by 1 April 2020 daily arrivals of Australian citizens by air was less than 1000 per day.
- Australian citizen arrival numbers continue to decline and averaged less than 350 a day for the week 14 September 2020 – 20 September 2020. The decrease in air arrivals is attributed to travel bans implemented in regional transit hubs, the unavailability or unreliability of commercial flight options and arrival caps being implemented in each state.

Travel Ban Foreign Nationals – 20 March 2020

- The Australian Government implemented a travel ban on all foreign national entering Australia effective from 2100hrs on 20 March 2020.
- From 2100hrs on 20 March 2020 until 20 September 2020 a total of 57,794 foreign nationals arrived in Australia (excluding crew), who were subject to exemptions:
 - 51,167 foreign nationals arrived by air
 - 6,627 foreign nationals arrived by sea

- Since the pandemic was declared a total of 198,872 foreign nationals (excluding crew) have arrived in Australia. Of these 57,794 (29%) have arrived since the ban was put in place by the Australian Government.

Repatriation of Australian Citizens and Permanent Residents

- Since 25 March 2020, the ABF has facilitated the inbound charter return of over 19,627 Australian citizens, permanent residents, immediate family members of an Australian citizen or permanent resident and New Zealand citizens who usually reside in Australia.
- As of 20 September 2020, this has culminated in 233 inbound repatriation flights from more than 38 countries. In addition the ABF has facilitated the safe arrival into Australia, on onward international transit of over 3,028 travellers through government assisted flights.

Mandatory Quarantine – 29 March 2020

- The Australian Government implemented a mandatory quarantine period of 14 days at the port of arrival for all passengers arriving into Australia from 29 March 2020.
- A total of 360,831 travellers have arrived in Australia by air and sea since mandatory quarantine was implemented (note this figure includes transit passengers). This figure represents less than 41% of all arrivals since the pandemic was declared on 11 March 2020.
- Following this announcement there was a significant decrease in arrivals by both air and sea into Australia, this can be attributed to this measure and the decreasing availability of commercial flights options for travellers.
 - In the seven days prior to mandatory quarantine (22 – 28 March 2020) a total of 91,502 travellers arrived in Australia via air and sea.
 - In the seven days after mandatory quarantine was implemented (29 March – 4 April 2020) a total of 19,701 travellers arrived in Australia via air and sea. This represents a reduction in arrivals of 78.5% on the previous 7 day period.
- Since mandatory quarantine measures were implemented New South Wales received 33% of travellers, Western Australia received 29% of travellers and Queensland received 20% of travellers. A breakdown of all arrivals by State and Territory are as follows:

State/Territory	Arrivals	Percentage
ACT	581	<1
NSW	120,066	33%
NT	13,470	4%
QLD	72,801	20%
SA	5,753	2%
TAS	1,575	<1
VIC	41,966	12%
WA	104,619	29%
TOTAL	360,831	

- Over the past two weeks (7 – 20 September 2020) 36% of travellers have arrived into New South Wales. A complete breakdown of arrivals by state and territory are below:

State/Territory	Arrivals	Percentage
ACT	547	<1
NSW	9,720	36%
NT	1,014	4%
QLD	5,266	20%
SA	760	3%
TAS	63	<1
VIC	2,025	8%
WA	7,950	30%
TOTAL	26,799	

ABF Commissioner Discretions

- The National Security Cabinet Committee granted discretionary powers to the ABF Commissioner authorising an exemption to travel restrictions on an individual basis. The categories are:
 - Transit
 - Foreign nationals travelling at the invitation of the Australian Commonwealth Government for the purpose of assisting in the COVID-19 response or whose entry would be in the national interest.
 - Critical medical services, including air ambulance and delivery of supplies that regularly arrive into Australia from international ports.
 - Persons with critical skills (for example, medical specialists, engineers, marine pilots and crews) by exception.
 - Person or any person in class of persons who, in the opinion of the Chief Medical Officer does not pose a risk of significant harm to the public health and will provide an essential service while in Australia.
 - Case-by-case exceptions may also be granted for humanitarian or compassionate reasons.
- Commissioner Discretion figures will differ from actual travel numbers over the same period as each discretion application may cover more than one traveller.

Consultation

- Border Measures Division and Australian Border Operations Centre – Op Bandora Repatriation.

Additional Briefing Material

Attachment A – Breakdown of Air and Sea arrivals by calendar week from 11 March 2020 until 20 September 2020.

Attachment B – International Air Arrivals by Departure Country

Responsible Officer	Contact Officer
Kylie Rendina Acting Deputy Commissioner Operations Operations Group §47E(d)	Sarah Nicolson Commander Strategic Coordination Branch §47E(d)

Attachment A: Breakdown of Air and Sea arrivals by calendar week from 11 March 2020 until 9 August 2020 (as recorded in the Travel and Immigration Processing System –TRIPS).

Week	Date Range	AIR ARRIVALS					SEA ARRIVALS				
		Citizens	Permanent Residents	Foreigners	Crew	Total	Citizens	Permanent Residents	Foreigners	Crew	Total
11 ¹	11 to 15 March 2020	93,137	11,355	101,024	8,057	213,573	138	11	2,450	7,307	s47F
12	16 to 22 March 2020	154,035	15,842	49,776	9,303	228,956	1,349	41	3,654	11,016	
13	23 to 29 March 2020	47,155	4,730	5,289	3,816	60,990	833	28	317	7,234	
14	30 March to 5 April 2020	5,688	778	822	2,504	9,792	458	10	237	7,314	
15	6 to 12 April 2020	3,197	600	894	1,923	6,614	71		163	7,793	
16	13 to 19 April 2020	3,813	696	764	1,435	6,708	73		243	7,432	
17	20 to 26 April 2020	3,257	917	954	1,392	6,520	31		166	7,291	
18	27 April to 3 May 2020	3,815	1,111	1,190	1,484	7,600	62		180	7,311	
19	4 to 10 May 2020	2,888	971	1,047	1,396	6,302	29		122	6,504	
20	11 to 17 May 2020	2,345	713	1,080	1,496	5,634	76		133	7,032	
21	18 to 24 May 2020	2,758	991	1,237	1,699	6,685	93		113	7,042	
22	25 to 31 May 2020	3,201	976	1,387	1,546	7,110	21		154	7,698	
23	1 to 7 June 2020	3,409	988	1,772	1,408	7,577	19		166	6,824	
24	8 to 14 June 2020	3,169	1,064	1,273	1,490	6,996	21		193	7,498	
25	15 to 21 June 2020	3,362	1,270	2,057	1,766	8,455	72		243	7,619	
26	22 to 28 June 2020	4,406	1,644	1,702	1,784	9,536	16		184	7,708	
27	29 June to 5 July 2020	3,955	1,213	1,683	1,793	8,644	23		122	6,527	
28	6 to 12 July 2020	2,772	670	1,639	1,793	6,874	13		194	7,171	
29	13 to 19 July 2020	2,236	537	883	1,930	5,586	62		149	6,990	
30	20 to 26 July 2020	2,068	448	1,163	1,873	5,552	48		173	7,177	
31	27 July to 2 August 2020	2,242	525	930	2,046	5,743	17		151	6,177	
32	3 to 9 August 2020	2,060	591	1,037	2,012	5,700	32		189	7,034	
33	10 to 16 August 2020	2,196	483	1,200	2,334	6,213	44		240	6,846	
34	17 to 23 August 2020	2,229	574	1,299	2,399	6,501	14		194	7,774	
35	24 to 30 August 2020	2,353	568	1,429	2,427	6,777	45		171	6,855	
36	31 August to 6 September 2020	2,374	621	1,710	2,544	7,249	37		190	6,679	
37	7 to 13 September 2020	2,237	658	1,351	2,520	6,766	39		192	7,281	
38	14 to 20 September 2020	2,367	623	1,447	2,538	6,975	29		150	5,362	
Total	(11 March to 20 September 2020)	368,724	52,157	188,039	68,708	677,628	3,765	129	10,833	202,496	

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¹ While week 11 starts on 9 March in 2020, the data included in this table commences from 11 March 2020, the date WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic.

**Department of Home Affairs
Select Committee on COVID-19**

BRIEF**Australia/New Zealand Travel Bubble****Key Talking Points**

- The Australian Government has announced two measures related to quarantine free travel from New Zealand.
 - On 5 May 2020, Prime Ministers Morrison and Ardern announced intentions to establish a trans-Tasman COVID-safe Travel Zone (Travel Zone) as soon as it is safe to do so.
 - This Travel Zone would enable two way, quarantine free travel between Australia and New Zealand.
 - The Travel Zone will commence once both governments agree that quarantine-free travel poses an acceptably low public health risk.
 - Negotiations on an arrangement are close to being finalised. However, outbreaks in Victoria and Auckland have delayed commencement.
 - On 4 September 2020, the Prime Minister announced Australia is looking at ways to allow travellers from New Zealand to enter Australia without the need to undertake quarantine.
 - This would allow individuals who have been in New Zealand for the preceding 14 days to travel to Australia without quarantine.
 - Individuals will need to certify that they have not been in an area that the Australian Chief Medical Officer considers to be a 'hot spot'.
- Officials in Australia and New Zealand are working through the implementation issues for both measures, including:
 - an agreed set of health pre-conditions to be met prior to implementation.
 - management of traveller movements through airports to avoid co-mingling with travellers who have arrived from outside the Travel Zone.
- Prime Minister Morrison has publicly indicated that once a Travel Zone with New Zealand is established, Australia will be in a position to explore expanding the arrangements to Pacific Island countries that express an interest in joining. Australia may also look to allow one-way quarantine free travel from Pacific Island countries that are low risk.

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If Asked – when will these arrangements commence?

- That is a question for the Department of Health.
 - The Australian Chief Medical Officer needs to assess that the public health risk of quarantine free travel is acceptably low.

Consultation

Australian Border Force, Legal Group

Responsible Officer Marc Ablong PSM Deputy Secretary National Resilience and Cyber Security s47E(d)	Contact Officer s47E(c) A/g Assistant Secretary Pacific and Transnational Issues Branch s47E(d)
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Department of Home Affairs

ABF PPE holdings, including advice provided to staff on PPE usage

BRIEF**ABF PPE Holdings and advice provided to staff on PPE Usage****Key Talking Points****ABF PPE Holdings**

- The Australian Border Force (ABF) maintains a supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for use by officers in the course of their normal duties, including:
 - Passenger baggage examinations; and
 - Handling of hazardous substances.
- At the beginning of January 2020, the ABF held stocks of the following PPE
 - Surgical Masks
 - P2/N95 Masks
 - Gowns
 - Gloves
 - Safety Glasses
 - Hand Sanitiser
 - Surface Wipes
- The ABF acquired additional stocks of P2/N95 masks in early-to-mid January 2020. These were originally intended for regions affected by bushfires and smoke haze; however, in late January they were redirected to ABF teams at international airports, in response to the threat of COVID-19.
- In late January, in response to health warnings surrounding coronavirus in China, additional PPE was purchased from the National Medical Stockpile (NMS) to support border exclusion and repatriation flights from China.
- Further PPE was purchased in mid-February, to support:
 - repatriation activity for passengers from the Diamond Princess cruise ship returning from Japan;
 - contracted service providers responsible for maintaining detention services and operational support;
 - Department of Home Affairs client-facing staff; and
 - Marine Pilots.

- In early March, it became more difficult to fill PPE orders domestically as demand for these products increased. In response, the ABF began utilising ASPEN Medical to purchase items through international sources - particularly P2 and surgical masks. ASPEN Medical was assisting the Department of Health with sourcing of PPE for the NMS, and the ABF drew on an existing contractual arrangement it had with ASPEN to secure PPE in a commercially-separate arrangement to Department of Health.
- A shipment of 500,000 P2 masks and 150,000 surgical masks was sourced by ASPEN, and received by the ABF, in early April. The ABF continues to draw on ASPEN Medical's international reach, to ensure adequate supplies of PPE are available to the ABF workforce at a time when local demand for NMS supplies is high, and PPE requests are not guaranteed to be filled.
- In July 2020, the ABF purchased an additional 200,000 surgical masks for ABF officers and Department of Home Affairs staff in Victoria to meet State Government workplace requirements relating to the wearing of masks.
- An additional 300,000 surgical masks have been purchased in August 2020 to ensure contingency supply arrangements for ABF Officers in New South Wales and Queensland noting the increased clusters of COVID -19 in these states.
- The ABF continues to monitor domestic suppliers' ability to meet demand and changes in the patterns of PPE usage within the ABF. All critical PPE items are reviewed and purchase of supplies are planned two months in advance of predicted depletion rates.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic period and up until 31 August 2020, the ABF has spent approximately \$15.5 million on PPE.
- The potential resumption of international travel will heavily impact the ABF's future PPE requirements.

Advice provided to staff on PPE Usage

- On 9 January 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) reported that Chinese authorities had made a preliminary determination of a novel (or new) coronavirus.
- Prior to this announcement, ABF officers had access to procedural instructions on Communicable Diseases, which offered advice on:
 - The potential for exposure to communicable diseases in the workplace;
 - Practical steps to eliminate or minimize the risk of exposure to these communicable diseases; and
 - Procedures for managing workers who may have been exposed to or who have contracted a communicable disease.

- On 10 January 2020, the ABF workforce was made aware of the existence of a virus originating in China, and advised that the WHO recommended the practicing of hand hygiene, and the donning of a surgical mask, as public health measures to prevent the spread of influenza and severe acute respiratory infections.
- Subsequent advice was received from the Department of Health, and distributed to the ABF workforce, as follows:

Fact Sheet**Distribution Date**

New Coronavirus Information Sheet for Border Staff (v1)	21 January 2020
Novel Coronavirus Information Sheet for Border Staff (v2)	27 January 2020
Information Sheet for Border Staff (v3)	01 February 2020
Information Sheet for Border Staff (v4)	03 February 2020

Note: Copies of these Fact Sheets are attached.

- The Department of Home Affairs provided further guidance to the Portfolio workforce on 12 February 2020, with the distribution of the 'Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCov) – FAQs' document. A copy of this document is attached.
- The Department of Home Affairs' Fact Sheet '*Coronavirus (COVID-19) PPE advice for officers*' was updated on 6 May 2020, and communicated to all ABF officers on 7 May 2020 via email, with messaging reinforced through other channels, including the chain of command.
- On 13 August 2020, the fact sheet was again updated in response to the recent rise in community transmission, evolving state and territory restrictions, and the requirements of some external partners such as some airport corporations. This advice was supported by the issuance of an operational directive to assist Aviation Traveller Operations staff in maintaining compliance with existing PPE policies.
- Information and instructional training videos, departmental factsheets, posters, the ABF COVID-19 Team Brief, and in-person/online information sessions hosted by Medical Officers of the Commonwealth (MOC) have also been developed for the ABF workforce. These communications have emphasised the importance of proper use, and disposal, of PPE items.

National Review of Hotel Quarantine

- Adjunct Professor Jane Halton AO PSM, wrote to the ABF on 5 August 2020, to advise some initial observations as part of the National Review of Hotel Quarantine arrangements. Her correspondence recommended the strengthening of PPE policies, procedures and practises in the airport environment.
- On 12 August 2020 the ABF issued an operational directive mandating protocols for the wearing of PPE across Aviation Traveller Operations in all Regional Commands. These protocols satisfied the requirements of some airport corporations, and aligned with Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment requirements when performing similar operational functions at air and sea ports, including:
 - Boarding and entering aircraft
 - Health Screening

- Light Aircraft processing
- Formal interviews
- The operational directive also established an assurance program, with Duty Managers and Team Leaders given responsibility for ensuring adherence to the directive by:
 - confirming adequate PPE supplies for each shift and processes for ordering PPE when supplies are low
 - maintaining appropriate PPE practices for officers as well as PPE training/reminders
 - ensuring safe PPE disposal practices are being followed.

Consultation

Internal:

- Port Operations Command
- People & Culture Division, Department of Home Affairs

External:

- Department of Health

Additional Briefing Material

Attachment A – *New Coronavirus Information Sheet for Border Staff (v1) – 17 January 2020*

Attachment B – *Novel Coronavirus Information Sheet for Border Staff (v 2) – 27 January 2020*

Attachment C – *Information Sheet for Border Staff (v 3) - 31 January 2020*

Attachment D – *Information Sheet for Border Staff (v 4) – 03 February 2020*

Attachment E – *Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCov) – FAQs – 11 February 2020*

Responsible Officer	Contact Officer
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s47E(d)	s47E(d)