

Concept Note: Creating a biosecure international travel ecosystem

Desired end state

- A biosecure international travel ecosystem, underpinned by agreed international standards enabling States to facilitate international travel at scale while mitigating the risk of transmission of COVID-19 and future human biosecurity hazards.

Background and Context


- Since late February 2020, States have implemented a range of (in some cases unprecedented) border restrictions to help contain the spread of COVID-19.
- The fact that these measures were necessary highlights the fundamental limitations of existing controls to prevent the global spread of a virus without ceasing almost all international travel.
- The impact on global health and economies demonstrate the criticality of collaborating on a solution that not only provides a pathway out of the COVID situation but also establishes a robust system that supports international travel in the face of the next pandemic.
- The resumption of international travel at scale needs, across all modes of transport, to be effectively managed through the implementation of a comprehensive framework to mitigate public health risks.

International standards

- While each country will make independent sovereign decisions about their border and pandemic control measures appropriate to their domestic circumstances, the development of common international government and industry standards (including vaccine status and certification) is critical for the resumption of sustainable international travel at scale.
- By cooperating closely other likeminded nations across a range of fora, we have an opportunity to influence the development of global standards in the following areas:
 - Health standards
 - Testing – agreement on the standard that can provide confidence to governments that international test results are a reliable confirmation of point in time diagnosis.
 - Vaccination – agreement on the standard for type, method and procedure for appropriate recording and verification of vaccinations to support risk assessments of travellers.
 - Data and information sharing standards
 - Digital collection and sharing of globally agreed data sets (eg individuals health / vaccination status, 14-day travel history, contact details) to support management of the risk posed by biohazards. This would facilitate individualised risk assessments rather than country based assessments.
 - Locally-held data, collected and stored in accordance with national privacy and other relevant legislation, should be discoverable for legitimate searches to validate voluntarily declared travel history and health status.

- Sharing digital information about traveller movement records would be analogous to (but distinct from) the existing advanced Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Record (PNR) systems.
- Industry standards
 - Development and implementation of high / low risk passenger assessment and management across the entire traveller continuum.
 - Development and implementation of passenger management systems and processes for travellers who present as a biosecurity risk en-route.
- Emerging Technology
 - Exploring the use of technology to support contact tracing.
 - Promoting the development and use of mobile phone applications to gather health record, travel history and contact tracing information ahead of the border.
 - Sharing lessons learned in the use of technology internationally to ensure consistency and alignment of passenger screening, risk stratification and quarantine preparation where possible.

Next Steps

- Standards will continue to emerge through a range of different forums, absent a centralised multi-disciplinary UN driven process.
- s. 33(a)(iii)

- Australia would further welcome your support in ensuring that the standards that emerge from forum such as the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO); the International Air Transport Association (IATA); the International Maritime Organization (IMO) International Organization for Migration (IOM); the World Health Organization (WHO); and World Customs Organisation (WCO) do so in a coherent, interconnected manner
- Australia encourages States to work constructively in:
 - ICAO on the global roadmap for the restart, recovery and resilience of the aviation sector following the COVID-19 outbreak;
 - the WHO on improvements to the global health architecture required to protect against future pandemics and improve responsiveness; and
 - the OCED to progress technical and policy initiatives to facilitate international mobility and the reopening on international borders.