



THE TORRES STRAIT LOCAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT GROUP



MEDIA RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE

3rd March 2020

GLOBAL COVID-19 (NOVEL CORONAVIRUS) OUTBREAK

Following the initial reports of the COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) outbreak, the Torres Strait Local Disaster Management Group (TS LDMG) has been working closely with key regional organisations, including Queensland Health as the lead agency, throughout the last month to ensure consistency and coordination of key information.

As of 02/03/20 Queensland has had 9 confirmed cases of COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus). Of the confirmed cases in Queensland:

- 5 cases were from a tour group originating in Wuhan, China
- 3 cases were from the Diamond Princess cruise ship group evacuated from Darwin for treatment in Queensland Hospitals
- 1 case was from a woman who returned from Iran.
- No cases have been reported within the Torres Strait Region.

The Australian Government considers the following countries to be at higher risk for COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus):

- Mainland China
- Iran
- Italy
- South Korea

If community members are travelling overseas, please visit the Australian Government fact sheet: <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/03/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-international-travellers.pdf>

TS LDMG advises of the importance to avoid unnecessary panic by keeping up to date with key information provided by Queensland Health via the following website: www.health.qld.gov.au/coronavirus or by calling: 13 HEALTH (13 432 584).

Restrictions to Border Movements:

As a preventative measure the Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC), during its Ordinary Meeting, held by video conference on the 18th February 2020, resolved to ban all travel of Papua New Guinea Nationals and Torres Strait Islanders under the Torres Strait Treaty and will not sign any permits allowing trade or travel between the Torres Strait and Papua New Guinea, until further notice.

International Ship Visits:

The Torres Shire Council continues to liaise with Queensland Maritime Services in relation to international ship visits to ensure that all passengers who disembark in the Torres Strait are properly screened.

Horn Island Airport:

Precautionary measures have been put into place by the Torres Shire Council should screening be required at the Horn Island Airport. These measures have been developed in conjunction with Queensland Health.

General Advice for Community Members:

Symptoms:

- A number of clinical symptoms have been reported in confirmed cases of COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus), including fever, a cough, sore throat, fatigue or shortness of breath.
- Anyone with these symptoms who has travelled to, or through mainland China, in the past 14 days should contact a doctor or local health centre immediately.
- If attending a local health centre, call ahead advising of symptoms and recent travel, so the centre can take necessary precautions.

Health Recommendations:

- Good hygiene including washing your hands and covering your mouth while coughing or sneezing is important to help protect against infection.

Testing:

- Please attend your local health centre for testing if you are feeling unwell (Fever, Cough, Fatigue, Sore throat or Shortness of breath) and:
 - have been to (or transit through) China in the last 14 days.
 - have been to Mainland China, Iran, Italy, South Korea, Cambodia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Singapore, or Thailand within the last 14 days.
- Anyone who is concerned should contact their local health centre immediately or call 13 HEALTH (13 432 584).

- ENDS -

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