

## **Preamble**

Ensuring the safety of its citizens is a prime responsibility of any Government and the current global pandemic has brought this into sharp focus. Measures that are designed to keep Australia safe from Covid-19 must also maintain the human rights of Australians. Australians who are stranded overseas must be repatriated expeditiously and safely. Australians who need to travel for humanitarian reasons (family illness and the like) must be able to do so, secure in the knowledge that they will be able to safely return.

## **Initial Principles**

The key to enabling repatriation, and urgent overseas travel, for Australians is purpose-built quarantine facilities able to protect against airborne transmission with the capacity to handle all returning travellers, and the logistical capacity to schedule such arrivals. The New Liberals will, in partnership with the States, ensure that such facilities with appropriate capacity are built urgently.

With such capacity all stranded Australians (citizens and permanent residents) can be safely repatriated.

## **Policy**

Australia's COVID-19 response and The New Liberal's policy are driven by two key factors:

- The safety and health of the Australian people; and
- The humanitarian crises presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our aim is to keep the number of new cases, and especially deaths and ongoing morbidity (long COVID), in Australia as low as possible until the vaccination rate is sufficient. Where possible, Covid-zero should look to be maintained in localities where it exists, until the vaccination rate is sufficient.

This rate should be governed by the relevant health departments however, given the current prevailing advice, should be at least:

- 80% of each state; and
- 80% of vulnerable groups such as First Nations people and those over 60 years of age.

These rates should include children given the existing threat posed by Delta and the potential threat of new variants.

All aspects of this policy are subject to change in light of the prevailing health advice at the time.

## **Safety and health**

- Vaccination
  - COVID-19 presents a clear and present threat to human life, and our way of life. As a result, vaccines must be administered urgently. The speed at which all Australians can be vaccinated will be a determining factor in our health and economic outcomes, as well as our ability to assist other nations which will aid in reduction of mutant variants. It should be funded and delivered as such.
  - Vaccinations should be provided free of charge, and available at accessible times and locations.
  - While vaccination will always be voluntary, companies, governments and employers are allowed to restrict access, service, employment on the basis of vaccination when

employees, patrons or the public would be exposed to unacceptable risks if unvaccinated.

- Programs and processes should be established to ensure remote areas are easily able to access vaccines.
- Purpose built quarantine
  - National purpose-built quarantine facilities must be constructed with sufficient capacity in order to safely quarantine all international arrivals.
  - Exemptions to quarantine within these facilities should only be granted in exceptional circumstances.
  - Quarantined persons will not incur any cost for completing their quarantine. Exempted overseas arrivals shall be required to pay a fee.
  - Until such facilities are operational, designs and protocols to manage and contain aerosol transmission must be applied to prevent leaks from hotel quarantine. These protocols and facilities should be updated as soon as any new medical advice is available.
- International travel restrictions
  - While vaccination rates remain at levels that put the public at an unacceptable level of risk in the case of an outbreak, a ban on international travel from Australia should remain in place. Exemptions to this ban should always be available and, while granted with caution, should be provided to those who wish to travel overseas for the following reasons:
    - Compassionate reasons, such as terminally ill family or bereavement
    - Caregiving
    - Relocating as part of an employment arrangement (not a temporary working holiday or regular business travel)
    - Temporary work in an essential service (e.g. healthcare, defence, humanitarian aid).
  - Exempt travellers will need to quarantine on return and in accordance with the repatriation priority described below.
  - Travel restrictions should be reviewed regularly and reconsidered based on Australia's vaccination levels, and the prevalence of COVID-19 worldwide.
- All Australian citizens returned with urgency
  - Improved quarantine facilities will allow for a higher capacity, meaning more Australians can be brought home each day.
  - In the absence of adequate affordable flights, the Australian government will provide flights to stranded citizens at no cost.
    - These should be arranged via Australian airlines.
  - No restriction shall be placed on Australians returning from a particular country, or region, other than:
    - Testing for COVID-19 before travelling to ensure the safety of other passengers and crew.
    - Travellers showing symptoms, to ensure the safety of other passengers and crew.
    - Restrictions on travel that existed prior to COVID-19.
  - To ensure that the most vulnerable Australians seeking return are repatriated first
    - All Australians wishing to return shall register with DFAT
    - DFAT will determine priority for repatriation according to risk posed to each person.

- DFAT will allocate quarantine slots according to capacity and liaise with airlines, or provide flights, to ensure these people are returned in appropriate order.

## **Humanitarian crisis**

### In Australia

- Reinstatement of JobKeeper until such time as lockdowns become unnecessary.
  - JobKeeper payments should only be available for businesses who make a loss in the financial year it is received.
  - Businesses may elect to receive JobKeeper if they are unsure of their profitability, however, any business whose net profit is greater than the amount of JobKeeper payments it received must return those payments.
- Those who lose work will be fund jobs under our Job Guarantee Scheme – see Full Employment and Job Guarantee Scheme Policy

### Overseas

- Assistance to other nations
  - Australia is in a fortunate position. With appropriate quarantine and vaccination rates, Australia should:
    - Fulfil its obligations to settle persons seeking asylum.
    - Provide vaccines, equipment and personnel to assist other nations.
    - When possible and if necessary, evacuate and provide care for high risk persons and their families from areas experiencing extreme outbreaks of COVID-19.
  - These measures will not only provide an incredible amount of humanitarian assistance but are also in Australia's best interest as the greatest threat of COVID-19 is currently posed by its spread in other nations creating vaccine resistant mutant variants.

Jonathon Momsen and Peter Buchanan