

Local Emergency Management Committee COVID-19 ADVICE 1: 19 March 2020

Hi All

Please find below a short update on the status of COVID-19 preparation and response activities. Please feel free to distribute through your channels. For more information, including resources and key contacts, please go to www.secureNT.nt.gov.au or www.health.gov.au

Groote Eylandt Status Update

While there are currently no known cases of COVID-19 on Groote the Groote Archipelago, you may be aware that several people have been tested as a precaution and have been following isolation protocols at the advice of health practitioners. Across the Northern Territory (NT), there remains just one confirmed case of COVID-19 – this person is a tourist visiting Darwin who is currently in isolation in Royal Darwin Hospital. There are no other confirmed cases anywhere else in the Territory.

Police are currently working with Top End Health Service and the Local Emergency Management Committee to develop a Local Pandemic Plan for the Groote Archipelago. Efforts are focusing on preventing COVID-19 from reaching the Archipelago however preparations are well underway in case these efforts are unsuccessful.

As part of the Local Pandemic Plan a Communications Plan is being developed to advise Groote Archipelago residents and organisations of significant updates, this will include the development of materials (audio and video) in Anindilyakwa in conjunction with the ALC Language Centre and local radio stations. Plans are also underway to hold community meetings.

Travel Restrictions to Groote

As of Monday 16 March 2020, anyone returning to Australia from international travel is required to serve a 14 day self-isolation period. Penalties may apply to anyone who does not follow this directive.

Remote communities in the Northern Territory have been closed to non-residents for all non-essential travel in response to concerns about the spread of COVID-19, and the increased risk factors that many community residents have. This includes the Groote Archipelago. Essential travel is defined as functions that are necessary to keep the community operating. If you have staff that hope to visit Groote Eylandt and are unsure if they meet the definition of essential travel you can call the Remote Community Travel Hotline for the NT (**1800 518 189**) for advice.

The Northern Territory Public Service has cancelled all non-essential travel to the Groote Archipelago and we encourage other organisations follow the advice of the NT Government and the Anindilyakwa Land Council (ALC).

GEMCO/South32 are temperature checking anyone who travels on their charter flights (see below) and we are currently exploring options to implement similar procedures with Airnorth flights.

Please note the Sealink Ferry service will continue to operate between Groote and Bickerton however will no longer travel to Numbulwar after the conclusion of a funeral this weekend.

Travel Advice within the Groote Archipelago

The ALC has distributed the attached advice for organisations who have staff on the Groote Archipelago. They have asked for essential services to continue but for organisations to limit the interaction between Alyangula and the other communities where possible/practical. Staff living in communities have been asked to continue to deliver services and to limit their interactions with Alyangula where possible.

We are continuing to work closely with the ALC to determine what other measures communities may wish to take and will provide updates as necessary.

FIFO Update

GEMCO/South32 have instigated a comprehensive monitoring regime for their FIFO workforce. As of Monday 16 March 2020 this was scaled up to temperature checks for every passenger planning to fly to Groote on their charter services. Any passenger with a temperature in excess of 37.3 degrees Celsius will not be permitted to fly to Groote on their charter flights. All FIFO employees who have been overseas will be required to self-isolate for 14 days before being allowed to return to Groote. Please follow the GEMCO Community Facebook page for their latest updates <https://www.facebook.com/GEMCOcommunity/>

Other organisations with FIFO staff are implementing similar arrangements. Commercial airlines and Charter companies are releasing information on their efforts so check their websites for more information.

Schools and Other NT Government Services

At this stage, NT Schools and other essential Government services (including on the Groote Archipelago) will remain open. Please follow any advice provided to you by Schools.

More Information

More information is available at www.secureNT.nt.gov.au or www.health.gov.au

Follow the advice regarding hand washing, coughing and sneezing into a tissue or your elbow and social distancing. While there is only one case of COVID-19 in the NT and none on Groote, these measures are good health practice and forming habits now will set us in good stead if the situation changes.

Finally, remember if you are sick please don't attend work.

This is a rapidly evolving situation and I thank you all for continuing to stay informed and for following the actions that we all need to take to keep Groote Eylandt safe. If anyone would like to discuss further please contact Regional Director – Groote Eylandt Jesse Fatnowna on 0438 304 647.

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