



The Hon. Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister

MEDIA STATEMENT

Friday 7 May 2021

NATIONAL CABINET STATEMENT

The National Cabinet met today to discuss Australia's COVID-19 response and changes to the Australian COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy.

National Cabinet continues to work together to address issues and find solutions for the health and economic consequences of COVID-19.

There have been 29,897 confirmed cases in Australia and, sadly, 910 people have died. More than 17.1 million tests have been undertaken in Australia.

Globally there have been over 155.6 million cases and sadly over 3.2 million deaths, with around 842,000 new cases and more than 13,000 deaths reported in the last 24 hours. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to surge in many countries around the world. Sadly in India there were more than 400,000 confirmed cases in the previous 24 hours.

Australia's COVID-19 vaccine roll out continues to expand. To date 2,554,531 doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered in Australia, including 81,000 in the previous 24 hours. Around 10 per cent of the Australian adult population have now had a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, including over 30 per cent of over 70 year olds.

The number of administration sites has expanded, with more than 5,000 general practices, general practice vaccination centres, Aboriginal health services and state clinics now administering COVID-19 vaccinations.

Today, National Cabinet received a briefing from Professor Brendan Murphy, Chair of the Science and Industry Technical Advisory Group, and the Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer, Professor Paul Kelly on the vaccination program and current status of the outbreak in India.

National Cabinet agreed the imperative to work together to administer COVID-19 vaccinations to Australians as quickly as possible.

National Cabinet will return to monthly meetings. The next meeting of National Cabinet will be on Friday 4 June 2021.

Resumption Of Facilitated Commercial Flights

National Cabinet noted that since the temporary pause on flights from India commenced there has been a sustained reduction in COVID-19 positive cases originating from India in Australia's quarantine system. The number of COVID-19 positive cases in the National Centre for Resilience at Howard Springs has fallen to 21, from more than 50 cases a week ago. Positive cases associated with previous facilitated flights from India are on track to reach zero by 14 May.

National Cabinet thanked the Indian Australian community in Australia and in India for their support and understanding during the temporary pause in passenger flights between Australia and India.

National Cabinet noted the advice that the *Biosecurity Act 2015* Determination has been effective in stemming the flow of positive cases into Australia to ensure the safety of Australia's quarantine system. The Determination was designed to be a temporary measure and the medical advice provided to the Minister for Health is that it will be safe to allow it to expire as planned on 15 May.

National Cabinet noted the agreement between the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory Government that facilitated commercial flights into the National Resilience Centre at Howard Springs will resume on May 15 with one flight per 7-9 days, with an estimated 1,000 Australians expected to return under these arrangements by the end of June. Vulnerable Australians will be prioritised on these flights. Passengers on flights will require mandatory PCR and Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT).

National Cabinet noted the New South Wales, Victorian and Queensland Governments' offer to accept further facilitated flights from India in May, with mandatory PCR and RAT in place and within existing quarantine capacity. South Australia will consider the arrangements over the next two weeks.

Post 15 May, transit points into Australia will be monitored carefully to ensure that positive case numbers remain within manageable levels. In particular the Commonwealth Government will work with the Sri Lankan Government to monitor the situation in Sri Lanka and whether further measures including RAT may need to be put in place to address transit point risks.

The current pause on direct commercial passenger flights between India and Australia remains in place and will be reviewed by the Commonwealth Government next week.

The Commonwealth will also consider tightening Australian Border Force (ABF) outbound travel restrictions for Australians travelling overseas and continue the restrictions in place in respect of applications for travel to high risk countries. National Cabinet agreed to vaccinate essential outbound Australian travellers with ABF travel exemptions approvals. This includes only people travelling in response to the COVID-19 outbreak including in the Pacific; urgent medical treatment; national interest; critical industries and business; compassionate and compelling grounds; urgent and unavoidable personal business.

Passenger Caps

National Cabinet noted that future agreements on capped flights between jurisdictions and the Commonwealth will be discussed bilaterally.