

## Coronavirus (COVID-19) FAQs – as at 13 March 2020 AEDT

**Q: The WHO has declared the coronavirus a pandemic, what does this mean?**

- A: On 11 March the WHO assessed that the coronavirus can be characterised as a pandemic.
- WHO outlined that in the past two weeks, the number of cases of the coronavirus outside China has increased 13-fold, and the number of affected countries has tripled.
  - In the days and weeks ahead, WHO expect to see the number of cases, the number of deaths, and the number of affected countries climb even higher.
  - WHO is deeply concerned both by the alarming levels of spread and severity, and by the alarming levels of inaction.

**Q: What does the WHO pandemic announcement mean for Australia?**

- A: Australia has a world class health system and is well placed to deal with the coronavirus pandemic. Australia is advanced in its preparedness having activated the Government's 'pandemic plan' two weeks ago, starting to put in place measures aimed at protecting Australians and visitors to our country. In addition, yesterday the Australian Government announced a comprehensive package to protect all Australians from the coronavirus.

**Q: What does the WHO pandemic announcement mean for Australian tourism?**

- A: Without knowing what additional measures, if any, the Government may put in place to respond to the coronavirus pandemic, or how long the outbreak will last, it's impossible to predict the full tourism impact - but it is likely to be significant.

The Prime Minister has unveiled plans for a \$17.6 billion stimulus package to aid Australia's economic recovery in the wake of the coronavirus, \$1 billion of which has been set aside to support those regions and communities that have been disproportionately affected by the economic impacts of the Coronavirus, including those heavily reliant on industries such as tourism, agriculture and education. This will include:

- the **waiver of fees and charges** for tourism businesses that operate in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the waiver of entry fees for Commonwealth National Parks.
- additional assistance to help businesses **identify alternative export markets or supply chains**; and
- targeted measures to further **promote domestic tourism**.

The Australian Tax Office (ATO) is also providing administrative relief for some tax obligations for people affected by the Coronavirus outbreak, on a case-by-case basis. The ATO will set up a **temporary shop front in Cairns** within the next few weeks with dedicated staff specialising in assisting small business. In addition, it will consider ways to enhance its presence in other significantly affected regions, making it easier for people to apply for relief. The ATO is considering further temporary shop fronts and face-to-face options.

**Q: What is the latest update on the coronavirus outbreak globally?**

- A: As at 13 March 2020, over 128,000 cases of the coronavirus have been reported globally, including more than 4,700 deaths. The majority of cases have been reported from mainland China (approximately 80,900), however the number of confirmed cases of the virus in other countries continues to increase: there are now more than 44,000 cases of the coronavirus

confirmed outside mainland China (the vast majority of which have been reported in Italy, South Korea, and Iran). 119 countries and regions have confirmed cases of the virus. Over 68,000 people have recovered from the virus.

**Q: What is the latest update on the coronavirus outbreak in Australia?**

**A:** There have been 156 confirmed cases of the coronavirus in Australia. 29 of these have no recent history of overseas travel. 3 people have died from the virus in Australia and 26 are reported to have recovered.

**Q: What can I tell customers who are planning to travel to Australia?**

**A:** Australia has a world class health care system and is very well-equipped to handle the coronavirus. Compared to other countries, Australia has had a relatively small number of confirmed cases of the virus. The majority of these have had a direct or indirect link to travel to Wuhan, China, Iran or the Diamond Princess cruise ship. However a number of cases of human-to-human transmission (without a history of overseas travel) have been confirmed.

In light of these developments, the Australian Government has recently extended the temporary border restrictions introduced to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

Australia's temporary border restrictions are being reviewed every 7 days. The following arrangements are currently in place and are due to be reviewed by 21 March:

- Australia will deny entry to anyone who has left or transited through mainland **China** in the last 14 days with the exception of Australian citizens, permanent residents, and immediate family members of Australian citizens and permanent residents including spouses, minor dependants and legal guardians.
- Australian citizens who have left or transited through mainland China in the last 14 days must isolate themselves for 14 days from the date of leaving mainland China.
- People who have had close contact with a proven case of novel coronavirus must isolate themselves for 14 days from the date of last contact.

On 29 February 2020, the Australian Government raised its travel warning for **Iran** to the same level as China:

- Foreign nationals who have left Iran (excluding permanent residents) on or after 1 March, will not be allowed to enter Australia until 14 days after they have left or transited through Iran.
- Australian citizens, permanent residents and their immediate family will still be able to enter Australia but will be required to self-isolate for 14 days after the date they left Iran.

The Australian Government travel warning for the **Republic of Korea** has also recently been raised:

- Foreign nationals who have left the Republic of Korea (excluding permanent residents) on or after 5 March, will not be allowed to enter Australia until 14 days after they have left or transited through the Republic of Korea.
- Australian citizens, permanent residents and their immediate family will still be able to enter Australia but will be required to self-isolate for 14 days after the date they left the Republic of Korea
- Health and aged-care workers returning from the Republic of Korea must also self-isolate for 14 days before returning to work.

On 11 March the Australian Government announced a travel warning for **Italy**:

- Foreign nationals who leave Italy (excluding permanent residents) at or after 11 March, will not be allowed to enter Australia until 14 days after they have left or transited through Italy.
- Australian citizens, permanent residents and their immediate family will still be able to enter Australia but will be required to self-isolate for 14 days after the date they left Italy

All international airports are open. However, most airlines have suspended flights to and from China. Airlines are also stopping flights into and out of Iran. Other international air services into Australia are operating as normal however some airlines have reduced or cancelled flights in response to a drop in demand for those services.

Sydney Airport is the only Australian airport that has direct flights from Wuhan, and those flights remain suspended. As with other countries, precautionary measures have been put in place in Australia, including:

- enhanced ill-traveller screening processes;
- pre-recorded announcements (in English and Chinese) in arrivals areas at international air and seaports; and
- informing travellers of the symptoms of the virus and what to do if they experience symptoms.

If you have current or future plans to travel to Australia from China or Iran, please speak to your travel agent or airline before travelling. You can keep up-to-date with the latest news on the coronavirus from the Australian Government's [Department of Health](#), including updated health warnings. For the most up-to-date travel advisories visit the [Smartraveller website](#).

**Q: What advice is there for Australians planning on taking an overseas cruise?**

A: On 9 March, DFAT updated advice on cruise travel:

- Australians, particularly those with underlying health concerns, should reconsider taking an overseas cruise due to the coronavirus. If in doubt, consult a medical professional before travelling.
- Travellers who, despite DFAT's advice, choose to proceed with their cruise and who are concerned about the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on your plans, check with your travel agent or cruise company and read and subscribe to our travel advisories for your destinations, including transit locations.
- Repatriation from cruise ships affected by COVID-19 should not be relied upon as an option.

**Q: What advice is there for Australians travelling overseas or returning to Australia from overseas?**

A: The Australian Government's [Smartraveller website](#) provides the most up-to-date advice to Australians travelling overseas or returning home from a destination with reported cases of the coronavirus or feeling unwell. If you are planning to travel, we strongly advise you visit the Smartraveller site and also contact your travel agent and airline before departure.

Travel alerts for [China](#), [Iran](#), [Italy](#), [Japan](#), [Korea](#) and [Mongolia](#) are currently in place.

For more information about the coronavirus call the National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080 or contact your state or territory public health agency:

- ACT - 02 5124 9213

- NSW - 1300 066 055
- NT - 08 8922 8044
- QLD - 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84)
- SA - 1300 232 272
- TAS - 1800 671 738
- VIC - 1300 651 160

Tourism Australia will continue to provide updated information as it becomes available.

**Q: What measures can I put in place to protect guests against coronavirus?**

A: The [Australian Government's Department of Health](#) recommend taking the following precautions:

- Everyone should practise good hygiene to protect against infections. Good hygiene includes:
  - washing your hands often with soap and water
  - using a tissue and cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze
  - avoiding close contact with others, such as touching.
- The Department of Health does not recommend surgical masks for healthy members of the public. A surgical mask will not protect you against the virus. Information on how and when to use a mask can be found [here](#).
- If you have a confirmed case of coronavirus, you need to isolate yourself to prevent it spreading to other people.

Read more about [protective measures against coronavirus](#) on the World Health Organization website.

**Q: Where should I report concerns about myself or my guests?**

A: If you or your guests become unwell and suspect you may have symptoms of coronavirus, you should seek medical attention. More information can be found [here](#). To speak to a registered nurse about your health concerns contact the Australian Government's Coronavirus Health Information Line 1800 020 080.

**Q: What actions is Tourism Australia taking to support travellers and industry?**

A: Tourism Australia is continuing to monitor the situation very closely, following the advice provided by the World Health Organisation and Australia's Department of Health, but it's a complex and fast evolving situation.

We also continue to stay very connected with the Federal Government to get the latest information and advice and to provide industry with as much accurate and up-to-date information as we can to share with their customers.

On 24 February Tourism Australia launched a new international recovery campaign, aimed at restimulating demand in the short term and gradually rebuilding Australia's international reputation. The new campaign takes inspiration from TA's long-standing and successful **There's Nothing Like Australia** global campaign platform, reminding the world that **There's Still Nothing Like Australia**.

We also continue to update [Australia.com](#) with information on the outbreak and links to relevant websites where travellers can access the latest health and travel advice.

**Q: Will Tourism Australia's upcoming Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE) still go ahead?**

A: Tourism Australia is aware of the announcement by Australia's Chief Medical Officer and the Prime Minister advising that mass gatherings of more than 500 people should be cancelled.

The health and welfare of anyone attending any of our events is paramount. Full risk assessments are carried out for all TA events.

We're currently reviewing the implications this announcement has for our program of industry and trade events, including talking to relevant partners. This includes our forthcoming Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE) event due to take place in Melbourne in May.

We will provide a further update on this shortly and make sure all registered delegates are fully informed of future decisions.