



Aide-Memoire

SUMMARY OF THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL PLAN FOR REOPENING

To	Hon Chris Hipkins (Minister for COVID-19 Response)	Report No	DPMC-2020/21-1222
From	Alice Hume	Date	5/07/2021

Purpose

1. On the 2nd July the Australian Cabinet agreed to the four phase 'National Plan to transition Australia's National COVID-19 Response' from the 'Fortress Australia' model that has served them over the past 15 months to managing COVID-19 in a way that is consistent with other infectious diseases.
2. This paper contains a summary of the phases as announced by Prime Minister Morrison with a focus on the incoming traveller caps and how they change from phase to phase.

Background

3. Each of the phases outlined during the 2nd July announcement (Attachment A) are conditional on domestic vaccination levels within Australia. The federal government is currently undertaking modelling to determine the 'trigger points' for moving between phases.
4. As this modelling and other measures (e.g. vaccination passports) are still in development phases the below summarises the indicated measures in each phase which may change as the science regarding COVID-19 and variants of concern (i.e. the Delta variant) emerges.
5. Phase 1 – 'Vaccinate, Prepare and Pilot'
 - a. The first phase is currently underway with a focus on Vaccination, preparing for lessening restrictions, and piloting new ways of allowing travellers into the country.
 - b. From 14 July the cap on travellers arriving by commercial flights will reduce by 50% in each of the major ports. This reduction is to lessen the stress on the hotel quarantine facilities due to the increased risks of the Delta variant.
 - c. This will reduce the number of weekly passengers arriving into Australia on commercial flights from 6070 to 3035 a week.
 - d. The major ports will see the following reduction in traveller numbers in phase 1 of the Australian approach.
 - o Sydney will go from 3010 passengers per week to 1505
 - o Perth 530 to 265

- Adelaide 530 to 265
- Melbourne 1000 to 500
- Brisbane 1000 (plus 300 surge capacity) to 500 (plus 150 surge capacity)

- e. In order to provide additional routes home for Australian travellers the Federal government will be increasing the number of 'facilitated commercial flights' which are organising by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.
- f. These flights will be arriving in Darwin with travellers on these flights undertaking quarantine at the National Resilience Facility at Howard Springs; thereby utilising the recent capacity increase, now 2,000, at the facility.
- g. This period will also see the trial and piloting of alternative quarantine options including the option for vaccinated travellers to quarantine at home. For which the South Australian government has indicated they will look to be involved in these pilots.
- h. Other measures during the first phase include the development of Medicare Vaccination Certificates, establishing digital vaccination authentication at internal borders, the roll out of the vaccination programme and preparation of a booster programme.

6. Phase 2 – 'Post Vaccination Phase'

- a. The second phase will be triggered by a yet to be determined level of vaccination within the Australian population.
- b. It is estimated that this will occur in January 2022 due to the vaccination plan and the projected numbers of vaccination doses given by the end of 2021. However, the precise number will be determined by modelling currently being undertaken by the Australian Federal Government.
- c. This phase will see the inbound traveller caps on commercial flights return to previous levels (as outline above) for unvaccinated travellers, with an additional higher cap for vaccinated travellers.
- d. When implemented vaccinated traveller will be able to utilise the new quarantine arrangements developed and tested during phase one.

7. Phase 3 – 'Consolidation Phase'

- a. The third phase is estimated to occur mid-2022 and will see all restrictions lifted for vaccinated residents and travellers. This will allow vaccinated travellers to travel freely into and out of Australia and exempt them from restrictions applied to the whole population in the instance of an outbreak.
- b. This phase will also see the extension of Quarantine Free Travel to other jurisdictions, which Singapore and the Pacific listed as likely candidates.

8. Phase 4 – 'Final Phase'

- a. The final phase is considered the 'New Normal' and will see COVID-19 treated consistently with how other infectious diseases are managed.
- b. It is envisaged that this phase will see vaccinated travellers arriving into Australia without restrictions whereas unvaccinated travellers may be required to undergo pre-departure and on arrival testing.

Comment


9. While an overview the 'Australian National Plan to transition Australia's National COVID-19 Response' has been released the Australian government continues work on the measures that would allow progression through each phase.
10. The 'Australian National Plan to transition Australia's National COVID-19 Response' is predicated on achieving domestic vaccination levels which are yet to be determined by federal government modellers.
11. The initial phase sees the number of travellers arriving by commercial flights reducing by half, with DFAT increasing the number of 'facilitated commercial flights' to the National Resilience Facility in the Howard Spring, Northern Territory, to make up some of the difference.
12. As Australia moves through phases 2, 3 and into the 'new normal' of phase 4 vaccinated travellers and residents will be provided additional freedom of movement and experience lesser restrictions than their unvaccinated counterparts.
13. This Aide-memoir has been prepared from publicly available material. Officials intend to engage with Australian officials on their plans in more detail in the coming weeks.

Recommendations

14. It is recommended that you note the contents of this aide-memoire.
15. It is recommended that you provide copies of this aide-memoire to Ministers to aid Cabinet discussion.



Alice Hume
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Group

NOTED

Hon Chris Hipkins Minister for COVID-19 Response
Date: 6 / 7 /2021

ATTACHMENT A

A3 - 'Australian Government – National Plan to transition Australia's National COVID-19 Response'

Proactively Released



National Plan to transition Australia's National COVID-19 Response

National Cabinet agreed to formulate a national plan to transition Australia's National COVID-19 Response from its current pre vaccination settings, focussing on continued suppression of community transmission, to post vaccination settings focussed on prevention of serious illness, hospitalisation and fatality, and the public health management of other infectious diseases

Phases triggered by the achievement of vaccination thresholds expressed as a percentage of the eligible population (16+), based on the scientific modelling conducted for the COVID-19 Risk Analysis and Response Task Force

A. Current Phase: Vaccinate, Prepare and Pilot

Continue to suppress the virus for the purpose of minimising community transmission

Measures may include:

- Implement the national vaccination plan to offer every Australian an opportunity to be vaccinated with the necessary doses of the relevant vaccine as soon as possible;
- Temporarily reduce commercial inbound passenger arrivals to all major ports by 50% from current caps by 14 July to reduce the pressure on quarantine facilities, due to the increased risks of the Delta strain of the virus;
- Lock downs to be used only as a last resort;
- Commonwealth to facilitate increased commercial flights to increase international repatriations to Darwin for quarantine at the National Resilience Facility at Howard Springs;
- Commonwealth to extend additional support through the International Freight Assistance Mechanism to ensure maintenance of essential freight supply lines impacted by the reduction of commercial caps at international airports;
- Trial and pilot the introduction of alternative quarantine options, including home quarantine for returning vaccinated travellers;
- Expand commercial trials for limited entry of student and economic visa holders
- Recognise and adopt the existing digital Medicare Vaccination Certificate (automatically generated for every vaccination registered on AIR);
- Establish digital vaccination authentication at international borders;
- Prepare vaccine booster programme; and
- Undertake a further review of the national hotel quarantine network.

B. Post Vaccination Phase

Seek to minimise serious illness, hospitalisation and fatality as a result of COVID-19

Measures may include:

- Ease restrictions on vaccinated residents - such as lock downs and border controls;
- Lock downs only in extreme circumstances to prevent escalating hospitalisation and fatality;
- Restore inbound passengers caps at previous levels for unvaccinated returning travellers and larger caps for vaccinated returning travellers;
- Allow capped entry of student and economic visa holders subject to quarantine arrangements and availability;
- Introduce new reduced quarantine arrangements for vaccinated residents; and
- Prepare/Implement Vaccine booster programme (depending on timing).

C. Consolidation Phase

Manage COVID-19 consistent with public health management of other infectious disease

Measures may include:

- No lock downs;
- Continue vaccine booster programme;
- Exempt vaccinated residents from all domestic restrictions;
- Abolish caps on returning vaccinated travellers;
- Allow increased capped entry of student, economic, and humanitarian visa holders;
- Lift all restrictions on outbound travel for vaccinated persons; and
- Extend travel bubble for unrestricted travel to new candidate countries (Singapore, Pacific).

D. Final Phase

Manage COVID-19 consistent with public health management of other infectious diseases

Measures may include:

- Allow uncapped inbound arrivals for all vaccinated persons, without quarantine; and
- Allow uncapped arrivals of non-vaccinated travellers subject to preflight and on arrival testing.