

Engagement: Press conference

Broadcaster: ABC News 24

Program: ABC News Afternoons

Speaker/s: Annastacia Palaszczuk (Queensland Premier)
Steven Miles (Queensland Health Minister)
Jeanette Young (Queensland Chief Health Officer)

Date: 30 January 2020

Duration: 8:40 minutes

E&OE

PREMIER:

... in relation to this. But of course, states have a role to play and by convening my Ministers, my Director-General, I want a clear government focus on this issue in Queensland. We've had one confirmed case. There are some other people who are unwell that have also been quarantined in the hospital, and I'll get our Chief Health Officer to talk about that. The issues around the women's soccer team are being dealt with very well, and we've been talking with the Consul and everybody is complying with what they need to do. My key message today to Queensland families is that please listen to authorities, listen to the Chief Health Officer. We need everyone to be calm and we are putting in place every possible precaution that we can. There is a national meeting that's happening at the moment. I'm quite sure that the Federal Government will talk extensively about that. But from a state's point of view, I am very comfortable with the precautions that Health are taking, the actions that the Health Minister and the Chief Health Officer are taking in relation to public health. So I'll hand over now to our Health Minister, then the Chief Health Officer to give us an update. Once again, too, we want to make sure that our Chinese community are also kept well-informed. We're making sure the information is going out in Mandarin. So far, so good. Everybody is listening to the health authorities. Stephen?

MINISTER MILES:

Thanks, so much, Premier. Well as you have all seen, this is a rapidly evolving situation and requires constant monitoring, constant communication with the public, both what's happening here in Queensland but also globally, and people should be assured that our health authorities are working hard to keep them safe. The staff of Queensland Health and our hospital services, our public health units are doing just a fantastic job. But we very much welcome the Premier convening today a whole-of-government meeting to allow us to seek the support of other agencies where we need them to manage what is a very complex, not just health task but also accommodation task and communication task, not just with, potentially, affected patients, the



wider community, the Chinese community, as well as accommodation providers and tourism operators, and airlines. And that is, as you can see, the work that has been underway and the work that will be further progressed thanks to the coordination across the whole-of-government after this meeting. Jeanette has an update on patients being tested today.

JEANETTE YOUNG:

Thank you, Minister. Thank you Premier. So in Queensland we one confirmed case of the novel coronavirus and today we are testing an additional 41 people for infection with the novel coronavirus. That, I believe, is a very good result. It means that people are out there in the community and are hearing our message that if they develop any respiratory symptoms within 14 days of return from China, including Hong Kong, to come forward and get tested. So I'm very pleased that that outcome is in place. The most important thing, I think, here is for people to understand that this is a respiratory virus. So it transmits through the air – no different to how flu does. Therefore, the precautions to respond to it are exactly the same – to wash your hands regularly, because it's by touching other surfaces and touching the face that you can then get infected. To maintain a one-metre distance if there is someone there coughing or sneezing. And most important of all, and I believe people have been listening to this, if you're unwell, stay home, don't spread any virus around the community. If you've been in China, including Hong Kong, in the last 14 days get yourself tested.

PREMIER:

Any questions to Dr Young?

REPORTER:

Of the 41 that you're testing, have they all been to China, I assume? And do you know what percentage roughly have been to Wuhan or...?

JEANETTE YOUNG:

No, these are people who have been in China within the last 14 days and have developed symptoms and they're now being tested.

REPORTER:

And I assume the four who were part of the same tour group as the one confirmed case of most interest to you.

JEANETTE YOUNG:

That's correct.

REPORTER:

Do you know when those test results [inaudible]?

JEANETTE YOUNG:

Yes, later this evening.



REPORTER:

Are you aware Dr of any human-to-human transmission within Queensland?

JEANETTE YOUNG:

No. We've only had one confirmed case. So until we start testing people, we'll not have had any human-to-human transmission in Queensland.

REPORTER:

Absolutely. So the advice to people who've travelled to Wuhan and then come to Queensland to isolate themselves, would that evolve if that situation changes?

JEANETTE YOUNG:

Yes, of course. Advice will continually change depending on the new information that we get from overseas and from the World Health Organization, who's meeting today.

REPORTER:

Of the 41 being tested, are they all South East Queensland or [inaudible]?

JEANETTE YOUNG:

No, they're across the state.

PREMIER:

I might just add too that I've also been in contact with Paul Sciarra from Virgin Airlines. They are doing everything they can assisting with Queensland Health about the flight that went to the Gold Coast, so I want to thank Virgin for their very swift action in relation to that. And also too, I just want to clarify to everyone too that the place where the person was staying on the Gold Coast, we are providing a lot of information to that hotel and other people that were staying there as well. Okay? So just as we all work together when it comes to cyclones, floods and bushfires, we are all working together in relation to this as well. I just want to reassure the public to please keep listening to the public messaging from the Chief Health Officer and we'll be keeping you up-to-date as quickly as possible. Thank you.

REPORTER:

Premier, can I just confirm, what are you referring to in regards to a Virgin flight?

PREMIER:

The Tiger Air

REPORTER:

Tiger Air?

PREMIER:

Tiger Air. The Tiger Air flight. Yep.



MINISTER MILES:

Just to clarify, my understand is that Tiger Air is a wholly-owned company of Virgin and so they are assisting us.

REPORTER:

Premier, do you know exactly how many were on the flight and, apart from that, how many the government has been able to contact?

PREMIER:

My understanding is that information is being provided to Queensland Health, the Chief Health Officer, and contacts are currently being made with those people. Okay? Alright? Thanks, everyone.

[END]

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Station: ABC News 24

Program: Mornings

Compere: Lorna Dunkley

Interviewee: Premier Palaszczuk, Chief Health Officer Jeannette Young

Date: 31 January 2020

Duration:

E&OE

LORNA DUNKLEY:

I want to take you over to Brisbane now. The Queensland Government there is speaking about coronavirus.

JEANNETTE YOUNG:

We've already instituted quarantine. We've already instituted a response at the border. We've already put in place testing. We've done so much already prior to WHO declaring this event. At other times they declared it and then we responded. We've been proactively doing everything we would normally do to respond to such a declaration.

(INAUDIBLE QUESTION)

JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Yes, so yesterday Governor in Council made this a notifiable disease. That means on clinical suspicion, any doctor or hospital that sees a patient that they think might have this novel coronavirus is obliged to immediately let me know. They let my staff know.

(INAUDIBLE QUESTION)

JEANNETTE YOUNG:

We're already asking people to be detained and people have been heeding that. As the Premier mentioned, we need to know where people are in Queensland so we can work with them if they've come back from Hubei Province in the last 14 days so we can work with them so they know they need to be detained.

(INAUDIBLE QUESTION)

JEANNETTE YOUNG:

It's never happened in the past. This has happened before, that such an emergency declaration was made in Queensland. I've never had to enact it because Queenslanders have always been extremely responsive to that request to self-isolate, but we need to have it available, so were

there someone who didn't wish to be detained, we immediately act and not have to wait for that declaration to happen.

(INAUDIBLE QUESTION)

JEANNETTE YOUNG:

No, it is in train now, so we are contact tracing of course the people immediately adjacent to these people on the plane, on that Tiger flight and then we're giving information to everyone else who was on the plane and the Tiger people have been extremely supportive and cooperative, so that we could do that, plus we need to go through in detail everyone who's been at the hotel these people were staying at. They were there for 4 hours, but we still need to work through all of that.

(INAUDIBLE QUESTION)

JEANNETTE YOUNG:

I don't have that information with me. We're going through that and it's changing rapidly as we get hold of more people.

REPORTER:

Do your federal counterparts contact... **(INAUDIBLE QUESTION)**

JEANNETTE YOUNG:

No, we do those cases in Queensland. I've already been in contact with my colleague in Victoria for them to work through what contact tracing they may need to do down there. So every state does the contact tracing within their jurisdiction. The Commonwealth's role in this is giving us the information so that we can do that contact tracing.

REPORTER:

These two cases, you said spent time in a hotel, but they spent 48 hours in Melbourne. Do you have information about flying down there... **(INAUDIBLE QUESTION)**

JEANNETTE YOUNG:

...that's why we provided this information to Victoria and they are working through that. I haven't received advice from them as to whether they found anyone they need to contact trace.

REPORTER:

Are you identifying a restaurant they attended?

JEANNETTE YOUNG:

I'm not involved in the contact tracing that other states do.

PREMIER PALASZCZUK:

That's Victoria's responsibility

JEANNETTE YOUNG:

They will let me know the results and we share all of that information - of course we have hook-ups every single day to discuss all these issues and so we get that information. That is their role and that's what they're doing.

REPORTER:

How satisfied you with the... **STATION CUT AWAY**

LORNA DUNKLEY:

We will leave that news conference there. An update from the Queensland Chief Health Officer on the coronavirus situation in her state.

LORNA DUNKLEY:

I want to return to Brisbane now because Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk is joining in on that news conference on coronavirus.

PREMIER PALASZCZUK:

There is no reason why the Federal Government can't be on a phone hook-up today or over this weekend, talking to all of the Premiers giving them the most up to date information. This is a serious national issue. I'm treating it very seriously here in Queensland. You can see how much work we are doing from a State Government agency, but this is a federal issue in terms of the people who are coming into Australia and the Federal Government has the information. It is contained on the incoming boarding cards. I cannot be clearer.

(INAUDIBLE QUESTION)...Greg Hunt said the information was... (INAUDIBLE QUESTION)

PREMIER PALASZCZUK:

That is not correct. That is not correct. What he then said is they provided information about the domestic flight that has come from Melbourne to the Gold Coast. That is the information they have provided.

(INAUDIBLE QUESTION)

PREMIER PALASZCZUK:

It has not been provided. I'm now calling on the Commonwealth to work in a spirit of national co-operation, to provide information to the states so we can help try to contain this virus.

REPORTER:

What is your advice for... (INAUDIBLE QUESTION)

PREMIER PALASZCZUK:

That would be a national issue. They will be issuing national alerts. That is a national responsibility. You have a whole lot of agencies that need national coordination right now. It not just a few ministers. This needs 100% national focus.

REPORTER:

The Prime Minister was widely criticised about the way he handles bushfires...

PREMIER PALASZCZUK:

I won't make any comment about the bushfires. Other people can make up their own minds about that. I am 100% focused here on dealing with the coronavirus. That is in Australia. It's here now. It needs to be contained.

(INAUDIBLE QUESTION)

PREMIER PALASZCZUK:

That's an issue for the Federal Government, but we have, we would have had a number of planes that have come in from mainland China over the last 1 days. Where are all those people?

REPORTER:

The plane that these patients were on went through another 13 flights, I think it was, before it had...

STATION CUT AWAY

LORNA DUNKLEY:

The Queensland Premier very critical of the Federal Government and the information she says they are not getting in Queensland over the coronavirus. Leaving that because we're going to Sydney. Federal Opposition Leader Anthony Albanese is speaking there.



Engagement: Press conference

Topic: Coronavirus

Speaker/s: Queensland Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk
Health Minister Steve Miles
Chief Health Officer Dr Jeannette Young,

Date: 2 March 2020

Duration: 19 minutes 5 seconds

E&OE

PREMIER:

...and we have additional capacity with our fever clinics. So preparation, containment and treatment is our best defence and that is exactly what we are doing. What we will be doing on Friday – and this is nothing new – when we prepare for natural disasters, we run a whole range of scenario situations. So we test. We test our departments, and we test the people on the ground. And we will be conducting that this Friday as well to ensure that all of the measures we have in place are working and robust. And let me reassure you that is exactly what we do when dealing with floods or cyclones or natural disasters. We are doing a scenario testing on Friday as well. And we will give the public more information about that because we don't want them to be alarmed. We want them to be aware that we will be doing that proactively. Now the Health Minister and the Chief Health Officer are in constant dialogue with their federal counterparts, and the Health Minister Steven Miles attended a meeting on Friday with his other ministers around the states of Australia. And it was stated there that Queensland is well prepared and is out the front when it comes to this preparation. So I'll hand over to Steven and our Chief Health Officer and then we're happy to take some questions. Thanks Steven.

MINISTER MILES:

Thank-you Premier. As the State Health and Community Safety Cabinet Sub Committee heard this afternoon our efforts to contain the virus here in Queensland and indeed Australia have been really effective. And what that has allowed is for our health system, particular our hospitals to do detailed planning about how they would respond should an epidemic occur here in Queensland. And the Premier has just outlined some of the details of that planning. As you can imagine to plan to be able to triple emergency department capacity, double intensive care unit capacity, that takes significant planning and significant investment and that is the work that we have been able to do because we have contained the virus so far. And that is a credit to our health services as well as to all of those people who self-isolated, who kept themselves at home to ensure the virus does not spread.



DR YOUNG:

So far we have been successful in Queensland at containing the virus. We've had nine cases, eight of those people have recovered and gone home and gone about their normal lives, and one lady remains in the Gold Coast University Hospital. And she did absolutely the perfect thing – the right thing – she came back from Iran – and then immediately when she had one symptom – one very minor symptom – she took herself home and then went to hospital, got tested and was found positive. And so we're currently working through with her workplace, whether anyone's had any degree of exposure and we don't believe anyone has. So due to the efforts of that lady I don't believe we'll see any risks eventuate from that. So that is the message. It's really, really important that anyone who returns from any country overseas and becomes unwell within 14 days of that return that they seek urgent medical advice and get tested if that's needed. And if we do that we'll be able to continue to contain the virus for as long as possible. Eventually there's every chance that we will see an outbreak here in Queensland, but all the work that we need to do to prepare for that is currently happening and we'll be able to manage that response for any Queenslanders who becomes unwell.

REPORTER:

So Dr Young, can I just ask... So from the way you're speaking it's not if but when. It what you're sort of...

DR YOUNG:

It is highly likely that we will see an outbreak in Queensland, and that's why all of the work is happening that's in place at the moment. But we believe that by doing that work, so ensuring that we can treat double the number of people in ICU than we would normally treat, and that we'd be able to manage triple the numbers through our Emergency Department system by working with colleagues in primary healthcare in the primary healthcare networks by using virtual appointments and so forth, that we'd be able to manage that increased load. So all that planning is happening.

REPORTER:

How do you increase that capacity? Does that mean working around the clock? Is it people going to be sent to other locations in other hospitals to make up the shortfall at the moment?

DR YOUNG:

No, it's about working with primary healthcare colleagues. So we have a lot of GPs in this state that of course are highly experience and highly trained, so we're working with them on how best to manage it. And then we're also working with different models of care so people don't necessarily need to turn up face-to-face. We know that over 80 percent of people will have a very mild disease. They don't actually need to see a health professional in person, it can be done through Skype – it can be done virtually – so we've got all of those plans being worked through at the moment with all of our hospital and health services.

REPORTER:

We've seen a lot of panic buying from supermarkets, and all sorts of providers, is there any need for that, or is that an overreaction?

DR YOUNG:

There's no need to stockpile anything, we in Australia produce our own food, we have enormous production capacity, so we're not going to run out. It would be wise for people to think about having some extra food at home so that if they do end up having to be isolated or quarantined, then they've already got some supplies. But even if they don't, that's not an issue because we nowadays have so many things like ordering groceries online, with other ways of getting food, and our Red Cross colleagues are working with us for those people who can't to ensure that they have food.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] certain that its inevitable and a matter of when, not if, that we get an epidemic here in Queensland?

DR YOUNG:

Because we're seeing it spread to countries throughout the world, so we won't be able to stop it here. We're doing our absolute best, and we've been very, very successful to date and I am sure that we'll be able to continue that for some time to come and it is really important that we do.

REPORTER:

What's the threshold for that? Is it a certain number of cases in a certain area? [inaudible]

DR YOUNG:

Yes, you've picked it. So one of the significant advantages to Queensland in managing this potential outbreak is we're a disperse state, we don't have those big collections of people that we see in some of those big cities in China and other parts of the world, so yes, we may well see some outbreaks in one part of the state, and the rest of the state be fine, so we'll manage that. Its about when you get sustained transmission from person-to-person and you don't know where the source is and you're not able to work that through, that's when you start...

REPORTER:

So, when you talk about tripling emergency department capacity, that's not physically tripling the number of beds, that's incorporating things like telephone, Skype?

DR YOUNG:

Yes, it's just making sure we've got the capacity to deal with up to triple the numbers of patients that we would normally deal with through our public emergency department system, and we know that we'll probably need that capacity for about a 10 week period, that is what the modelling is showing us.

REPORTER:

Would that apply to someone who [inaudible] forward that on to the GP?

DR YOUNG:

No, we'll manage that. So we've already got fever clinics able to be stood up at every hospital of any size at all throughout the state, we've already been standing them up at both the Gold Coast and Metro North, so we've already got those in place and we can stand them up immediately if the load coming through to the emergency department exceeds the capacity.

REPORTER:

Dr Young, is the tripling across, sorry, is the tripling across the entire state evenly, or have you prioritised certain areas?

DR YOUNG:

No because we've already got hospitals with bigger normal numbers, so you'd expect that they would need triple that usual number. So it depends on the size of the facility and how many people they normally see. So it's a good, solid rough guidance for our hospitals to prepare, so they know what they're preparing for.

REPORTER:

Premier, if there is an outbreak in a certain part of the state, as Dr Young mentioned, would you and Cabinet then consider some sort of travel ban, or restrictions to [inaudible] going to and from those areas?

PREMIER:

Look, let's just... we're doing our scenario testing on Friday, I can't properly answer your question today. Also too, don't forget the federal government has the lead nationally when it comes to dealing with this issue at a national level. But, if there was a big outbreak in a particular area, we would then have to look at having to potentially closing down schools and stopping major events or cautioning people about going. But let me just reiterate here, we are planning and doing the preparation just as we would for any other natural disaster. So we are making sure that we are getting everything put in place, that we have a good, solid plan and we are preparing. I mean, I am absolutely in awe of the people who've been putting together these plans, they have been working around the clock and that is the best way we can prepare is to make sure we have good, decent plans.

REPORTER:

Are there thresholds in place Premier, are there thresholds in place for those decisions to be made, or are they made on a case-by-case basis?

PREMIER:

They will be having all of those, yes, that is currently being worked through, it has been worked through over the last couple of weeks, and as we said, Australia is a big country and we are seeing those outbreaks happen in other parts of the world, as Dr Young said, so we are planning. I mean we would be criticised if we weren't planning, and we're not alone, every

state is doing this contingency planning now. It's the right thing to do, but I just want to reassure all the families at home, please just make sure that you are listening to the public messages, I mean we are doing everything we can to contain. But when we do contact tracing, that is also really important, so that means make sure you have your mobile phone handy because if you have come into close proximity with someone who has the coronavirus, it is very important that we get you self-isolated as quickly as possible to stop the spread. Here, the key is stopping the spread of the virus, and that is where every single Queenslander can do the right thing, and follow those steps that I have said very clearly here today, and like Dr Young has said, listen to our Chief Health Officer, make sure you are thoroughly washing your hands, keeping your distance and following processes.

REPORTER:

A few questions; what would be the ultimate capacity of our hospitals in a peak scenario, like in intensive care and emergency, and could we ever see suburbs being shut down, like in Italy?

PREMIER:

We're not at that situation yet, but what we are doing is we are making sure that our emergency departments are prepared, that is the number one thing we are doing. And making sure that the staff are prepared, our paramedics, our frontline services, our emergency department, the hospital and health services across the state are all getting briefings. So this is happening and we are making sure that we are as well prepared as we possibly can.

REPORTER:

Scenario, is that [inaudible] have a lot of people follow up,.

PREMIER:

Well scenario testing is that you will have people there, they will be visible and we are just doing a scenario test to see how everything... how people get transported and everything.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] people rolling up in a rush...

PREMIER:

Yes, yes.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

PREMIER:

I don't organise the scenario that is done by the State Disaster Coordinator, but I will be there with my other ministers as if it was a real-life situation.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]



PREMIER:

No, it's physical.

REPORTER:

Do you have people turning up to emergency departments, or...?

PREMIER:

We will be testing everything out.

REPORTER:

So Premier, are you treating this like you would another disaster?

PREMIER:

Yes, absolutely, that's a very good way of putting it, and as I've said from day one, the way in which we handle our natural disasters, all of the pre-planning those goes into it is exactly the same way that we are planning for this scenario as well.

REPORTER:

The South Australian Premier just announced [inaudible]

PREMIER:

Yes, I am very confident. We passed those laws, very happy that we've got them.

REPORTER:

New South Wales has today announced that all school students would not be able to travel overseas on school excursions [inaudible].

PREMIER:

I am happy to have a look at that, Alison.

REPORTER:

We have [inaudible] that the state government should be stepping aside and letting the federal agencies take control of the response to this, what do you say to that?

PREMIER:

We have the capacity on the ground, and we are working very closely with the federal government. I want to make that very clear, the federal government has control of the borders, they are coordinating the national response, we are feeding onto that national response. But at a state level, and as Premier, and working with my cabinet team, we are making sure that our state is as well prepared as it possibly can be, just as the way we prepare for natural disasters – floods and bushfires and cyclones.

REPORTER:

How much does the upcoming flu season affect the difficulty in preparing for...

PREMIER:

Yes, well Dr Young has already said when the flu season starts, everyone should make sure that they have their vaccination, I think that is step number one. But I might get Dr Young to talk about that as well.

DR YOUNG:

We are extremely fortunate in Queensland that over the last two years, we've been rolling out gene expert machines to all of our larger hospitals so we can very, very rapidly test for flu. So we'll be able to test people and work out if they've got flu, because we do have treatments for flu. If we have an outbreak in a nursing, for instance, we can make sure that everyone has been vaccinated, they usually have but we can double check that, and we can also provide antivirals so that we can limit people getting the flu. So there are lots of things we can do for flu, which is why it is really important we can diagnose it very quickly, which we can in Queensland. We have gene expert machines across the state. So that's all in place. But the most important thing to do, of course, will be once the flu vaccine is available – it's usually available around April – it will be very, very important that everyone get vaccinated. Because, for two reasons: one, you don't want to get two viruses at the same time because you're always going to do worse. So if we can stop one virus, that's a good thing for everyone. Secondly, we want our health system to be able to focus on the novel coronavirus, so we want to decrease the numbers of people coming through. We did have a very bad flu season last year, which sort of helps us this year because a lot of people will have immunity. So that goes to assist us, as well.

REPORTER:

Does that slow down the testing process if someone comes in with generic symptoms and you have to test them twice, I guess... or do you have to test them twice for the flu and then the coronavirus?

DR YOUNG:

Yeah. It doesn't slow it down. You immediately can test them with the gene expert, so you can get a rapid result for flu, and then also you send off the other test to one of the two labs here in Brisbane.

REPORTER:

With those medical supplies, can I just check had they already been stockpiled here in Queensland for this sort of scenario or have they come in from interstate or [inaudible]?

DR YOUNG:

It depends. So we do have some stockpiles that we keep all the time in preparation for a potential pandemic. So that's part of our planning, so we have those stockpiles. But we're now going out and purchasing additional stock on top of that.

REPORTER:

Minister Miles, do you know the capacity of, like bed capacity, what we're talking about in emergency and intensive care overall?



DR YOUNG:

We have around 500 beds in our traditional intensive care unit areas, but we can rapidly increase that by using other parts of the hospital. So we've got high dependency areas which we can put ventilated capacity into, then similarly we'll be decreasing the amount of elective surgery we're doing because people will be sick and you can't operate on unwell people, so we'll have that capacity available and we'll have all of those ventilators available as well. So that's the work that's currently being planned for.

PREMIER:

Alright, we might just finish up...

REPORTER:

Can I just check, when you talk about stockpiling medicines and so on, is there any concern about Queenslanders not being able to buy things like hand sanitiser or masks, as has happened in some other countries?

DR YOUNG:

The first thing is hand sanitiser is a very good thing when you're out and about, to keep in your pocket or your handbag or whatever, but in actual fact, washing your hands with soap and water is far more effective because when you wash your hands with soap and water you're rubbing them, so you're getting rid of that virus, whereas when you use a hand sanitiser it slides on, it doesn't have that same friction. So we have plenty of soap and water, and that's what people should be using. Hand sanitiser is really only while you're out and about and you don't have any access to soap and water. So yes, I do understand that there has been a decrease in the availability of hand sanitiser. There are more stocks, I understand, coming in, and people will just keep an eye open for that.

REPORTER:

How much is this total package? This tripling emergency departments, adequate staffing and then ventilators, have you got a cost?

PREMIER:

I don't have it on me. I can get that for you. But let me just say this in conclusion. Okay, so we are very well prepared. Everybody should just go about their normal business, their normal daily lives as per usual. We will update you if there is an outbreak, but at the moment we are doing a great job at containment and we can keep that happening if everybody stays alert and is prepared. So I might end on that note. Thank you.

[ENDS]

Engagement: Press conference

Topic: Coronavirus

Speaker/s: Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk
Queensland Health Minister Steven Miles
Queensland Chief Health Officer Dr Jeannette Young
Deputy Commissioner Steve Gollschewski (State Disaster Coordinator)

Date: 6 March 2020

Duration: 22mins 42 secs

E&OE

PREMIER:

...had a really productive morning in terms of scenario training and making sure that all the ministers and the departments are across a whole range of issues when it comes to dealing with the coronavirus.

From the outset, can I say of course we are still focused on isolation and making sure that who has been overseas is isolated from those particular countries but also to, we are very focused on but contact tracing as well which Dr Young will talk about in a lot more detail about. When it comes to dealing with this issue, we need to do whatever it takes and the Federal Government also needs to do whatever it takes. I understand the Prime Minister has made some comments this morning about some cost sharing with the states. And I thank him for that outreach and we will have more to say about that once we get the details in the letter.

But I'm not going to go down to COAG next week for a fight. I expect that at COAG next week, and I have been asking this since the end of January, that the Prime Minister should have convened a COAG meeting of all states and territories on the specific topic of coronavirus to ensure that our national response and our state responses are ready.

In Queensland, I think the public can be reassured that we have done this type of planning when it comes to natural disasters and we are doing exactly that type and kind of planning for a possible outbreak of coronavirus. My message to the families at home, I know there are mums and dads and students out there who are worried. And my message is do not panic. We are making sure that we are ready to deal with any potential outbreaks but there is no need to panic at this stage. We have everything in place that needs to be in place.

But I am still concerned that we have not had a dedicated national meeting where we can discuss this in depth. I have been asking for this since the end of January. I am confident that the learnings of today, we have a lot more work to do after our planning session today, a lot more work to do, but I am very confident that we have the best teams ready to deal with this

in Queensland. And I want to commend the outstanding work of the Department of Health and Dr Young and Steven Miles, the minister, in relation to dealing with issues quickly. And it is very important that we deal with them quickly and that we give confidence to the Queensland public. So I am going to hand over to Dr Young and then our State Disaster Coordinator and our minister and then we're happy to some questions.

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Thank you Premier. Today in Queensland we have 13 confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus. Every single one of those cases, we know how they contracted it. So it is really important that anyone who comes into Queensland who has travelled within the last 14 days overseas and develops any symptoms immediately seeks medical advice. They can ring 13HEALTH at any time and they can go and see their GP but before they go and see their GP, they should ring and ask what arrangements the GP wants them to follow so that they do not potentially infect anyone else in that GP surgery in the waiting room or otherwise.

Or they can attend their local emergency department who may have a fever clinic stood up or may not, that local hospital will let them know what they should do. That is really important. We are containing this disease effectively in Queensland at this point. We want to contain it as long as we possibly can. Because we know that the longer we contain it, we can delay the spread through our communities so that we can make sure that we can provide the care that every single Queensland needs.

Once people are confirmed to have the disease, it is really important that although 80% of people are going to have such a mild disease that they would hardly know they have it, it is really important that they isolate themselves so that they do not spread the disease to other people who could be more vulnerable. We know that older people, particularly over age 80 but lesser so over age 60, who have chronic disease are the most vulnerable groups. Children are not more vulnerable to this, nor are pregnant women. But older people with chronic disease are, so it is really important that younger people who will get a mild disease still isolate themselves so they don't spread it to people who are vulnerable.

MINISTER MILES:

As the Chief Health Officer has outlined, Queensland has been incredibly successful at containing the spread of the novel coronavirus so far, and all 13 cases have been identified, the source of their infection has been identified, and contact tracing has occurred and I really want to thank all of the Queenslanders who have listened and taken the advice that we have provided, as well as the Chief Health Officer and all of our fantastic Queensland Health staff who have delivered on the outcome. But can give Queenslanders confident that as we go forward, if and when an outbreak occurs, we are very well prepared that practice scenarios we can have performed this morning have been incredibly useful to get every agency, every arm of government in the one room and on the same page with regards to how we will respond, if and when an outbreak occurs here in Queensland.



STEVE GOLLSCHESKI

Thank you, in addition to the excellent response Queensland Health giving is the lead agency, we are using a well exercised and highly capable disaster management relations to all aspects of government together, all layers, and other agencies in the general community to make sure that we are all connected our planning. We are well advanced in our planning for business continuity and our response and today of course we have exercised that to make sure that there are no gaps in that so at this stage we are in very good shape. Queensland has a great history in using the whole of government approach to deal with these issues and will continue to do that. Thank you.

REPORTER:

You said there's a lot more work to do, what needs to be done?

PREMIER PALASZCZUK:

Whenever you have a scenario you actually then, there is follow-up to make sure that we have got everything in place and I'm very comfortable with what we did today and in fact, I'm very proud of the work that we did today.

REPORTER:

But you didn't see any shortcomings today that need to be fixed?

PREMIER:

Look, there were always things that need to be fixed but everyone was really responsive and everyone was ready and knew what their departments would have to do and the ministers were very clear of their obligations as well I am very happy with that. And I think Queenslanders should have confidence with the way in which we prepare for natural disasters is exactly what we're doing in preparation for a potential coronavirus outbreak.

REPORTER:

Can you expand on what types of scenarios you went through today?

PREMIER:

I can't specifically but I can tell you that it was a Brisbane based scenario, regional based scenario and a tropical cyclone as well, so we tested everything today, and we have procedures and plans in place, just as we would when we deal with bushfires and cyclones.

REPORTER:

Doctors have started stockpiling Chloroquine....

PREMIER:

I will get Doctor Young to address that. Are there any other issues on that topic me at the moment?

REPORTER:

Did you discuss the threshold or what...when we'll get to a stage when we'll close schools...

PREMIER:

There is not a specific threshold, so what we were doing what we did discuss, I am quite happy to talk about that. What we did discuss is that we will take the advice of the Education Department, and the Chief Health Officer, when it comes to making a decision, and what else is happening in that community, but front and centre is the public's health, and their safety, so that is our number one concern, and as I said yesterday, and they just want to reiterate that today as well. What I said yesterday is this is a public health issue, but it has also got a huge economic impact attached to it as well, and I've firmly believe that the Federal Government should be looking at both of those in tandem together, just as we are, and you can't separate the two, because families out there are concerned. Everybody is talking about it, and we need to make sure that everybody in Queensland is reassured that we are doing whatever it takes, whatever it takes to deal with a potential outbreak. OK, Doctor Young?

REPORTER:

Doctors have begun to stockpile their own supply of this anti-malaria drug called Chloroquine, and I was wondering if you were aware of that and whether the hospitals should be stockpiling their own supply?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

There is no need for anyone to stockpile any drugs. There is no drug that is known to be of benefit for this novel Coronavirus. There's been some suggestions that there might be some antivirals that may be of benefit, and there are trials happening around the world, but at this point in time there would be no need to stockpile anything because there isn't anything that we know that works. So why they have chosen that drug, I don't know, I am not aware of that, because there is no evidence that it works any better than anything else, or having any efficacy, and it wouldn't be in short supply because it is available for its usual use.

REPORTER:

There have been reports of people having scripts made up for all sorts of things, is that necessary?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

No, it's not necessary. We have got a really good process in place and we are working through all of that, the states and territories in the Commonwealth health leads a meeting at one o'clock every single day to work through all of those issues and there isn't a requirement we are working through in our supply chain.

REPORTER:

And you did say Dr sorry, that if you're perfectly well, you're a young guy and you get a case it will be mild and you may not be ill?

DR JEANETTE YOUNG:

The vast majority of people will, who are younger, will get mild cases. There's always exceptions to anything but the vast majority will get a mild case.

REPORTER:

Could I be walking around with a mild case and just think it's a cold or a mild flu and still not self-isolate? Could that be happening?

DR JEANETTE YOUNG:

No because you would know through all of the messaging that's happening that if you're at risk you need to go and get tested and in Queensland we're extremely fortunate. We've got a very, very good pathology system, both in the public and the private so we now can do testing at 3 public laboratories across the State. At Public Health Lab at Coopers Plains, the Central Lab at Herston and at the lab in Townsville plus QML and S&N have both stood up testing.

REPORTER:

If you're pregnant or have young children and if you're otherwise well you shouldn't panic?

DR JEANETTE YOUNG:

No one should be panicking. This is another disease that is spreading through our community as we have with lots of diseases, we just need to be aware of it, be alert to it and we don't want it to spread. We want to minimise its spread where we can because we know everyone is susceptible. So we just know that if the whole community were to get it at the same time that would have a significant impact on society in terms of workforce and so forth so our job is to delay its spread and we're doing that very, very effectively at the moment and my request of everyone is just to be alert. So to be aware if they've got symptoms and at the moment if they've been overseas in the previous 14 days just to go and get tested. It's a simple, straight forward process and then they'll know and if they are tested positive then we'll contact trace people who they've come into contact with and we'll ask them to isolate. At the moment we're admitting any confirmed case to hospital but that will gradually change as we get more cases, particularly if people are mild they don't need to be in hospital.

REPORTER:

Have you contacted the passengers from the Emirates flight on the 26-year old's diagnosis?

DR JEANETTE YOUNG:

We're in the process of contacting a large number of planes so that's all-in train. We know that the risk of actually developing infection whilst being on a plane is particularly low, but we will just because we're doing our absolute best to contact trace anyone who's at any risk. We'll continue to contact trace those people 2 rows in front, behind and either side. So we're just working with the National Incident Room who get's the information from the relevant airlines for us. So that's all happening and in train.

REPORTER:

The staff at the Mater were put into self-isolation. Is there anything that can be done to prevent people delivering front line medical services from contracting the virus?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Yes, an enormous amount. So we have PPE – personal protective equipment, and that's available in all of our hospitals of course, and in the private hospitals. So staff have been trained. So what happened there is that they weren't aware of this individual who was coming in. So they didn't use that personal protective equipment. So the Mater has done absolutely the right thing, they are an excellent organisation. So they did that contact tracing, they worked out who that patient came into contact with before they started using the PPE, and they've organised them to go into quarantine for two weeks. So they've got it all well in hand.

REPORTER:

Presumably if you suspect you have the virus and you need to go into hospital who go to the [inaudible].

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

If the hospital has set the fever clinic up. So hospitals are setting them up depending on the load. If they're only getting one patient every 24 hours, 48 hours they wouldn't set it up. It's only when they get a large number like the Gold Coast, they had 100 turning up in an afternoon. They set up the fever clinic so they could spare the emergency department. But at this point in time, and probably for a while to come, there are far, far more people who need normal care than there are for people who need care for potential infection with the novel coronavirus.

REPORTER:

When is it expected to peak in Queensland?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

That's something we're keeping a very, very close eye on at the moment, so we're just looking at what's happening in other states and what's happening overseas. So it's very hard to predict when that will happen. But that's why all this planning is happening now, so we'll be ready for when it does, if it does arrive in our state.

REPORTER:

Just back on the flights, are you able to say which ones you are still looking at?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

There's a number we are looking at for people who've come through – it's best to get that information directly rather than me trying to remember the flight numbers. Yeah, but we've got all of that, but of course you can get that from the media team.



REPORTER:

Dr Young what happens if a small minority of health workers might get sick, and their replacements come in. Are we going to run short on hospital workers, paramedics and whatnot?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

We've got all of that planning happening, that's part of business continuity planning. We're already looking at different ways of supplementing that workforce, and how we can work through and what work we can maybe delay, so that's part of all of the planning that we have been doing.

REPORTER:

Would annual leave restrictions be part of that?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

All of those things are being discussed now, and we are working with the unions about it.

REPORTER:

There's no suggestion that elective surgery [inaudible]

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Well the minister announced last week an additional \$20 million dollars to go into elective surgeries so we could bump it up now, so that when this epidemic arrives in Queensland, we've already had that work done so that then we could manage if there's a decrease in elective surgery. So it's really important that we try and do as much of the routine work that can be done and scheduled now.

REPORTER:

Do you have any fever clinics you'll set up, or would it depend on the hospital?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

It depends on every hospital. Every hospital has the capacity to do it if it's of benefit. I mean they're only being set up if they need it to be set up.

REPORTER:

Is that all across Queensland sorry?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Yes.

REPORTER:

What is a fever clinic?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

It's just somewhere where they know that the people who are coming in are at risk of having the novel coronavirus, so they have processes in place to isolate so the people coming in don't infect each other, and they have protocols so they can very quickly and efficiently manage the people coming through. Because we know that when people first develop the infection, the vast, vast majority have a very mild illness, and then it's day five or six that they get sick, when they deteriorate and might need more medical care. So those first visits are very quick. They just need to have a discussion, have a swab taken, and then asked to go home and isolate until they get the result. And if it's positive they're asked at the moment to come back into hospital, and that's organised with them, and they get isolated in hospital as we've done with the eleven to date. In the future, they'd probably be staying at home with that mild disease, then, if they become the twenty per cent who become more unwell might then need hospital care.

REPORTER:

Are you seeing increased numbers of people already trying to use the [inaudible]?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

We have seen some increased numbers which has been very, very good because that's appropriate and that's when we've been setting up those fever clinics. So the community is clearly hearing the messaging and taking that on board and coming forward, which is excellent.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] between the fever clinic and back home, are people at risk of being exposed if someone is going between hospital and their home?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

That's what we then do, so if someone is found to be positive then we'll do that contact tracing. But remember, we've now tested... it must be about 1500 people and we've had 13 positive. Well, I think it's even more than that, we've had enormous numbers of tests done, so the vast, vast majority are negative.

REPORTER:

In terms of mass gatherings, any concerns of this [inaudible]

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

No concerns at all, we have those groups that at border are told that they need to go into home quarantine for 14 days, so of course they won't be attending mass gatherings, so that's people from mainland China, people from Iran and from South Korea, and we're also asking people from Italy – although they're not required to go into home quarantine, we're asking them not to go to mass gatherings. But for everyone else, life is normal, and they should continue as they normally would.



REPORTER:

One for the Premier, the new quarantine powers, have they had to be used at all?

PREMIER:

Steven, do you know the answer to that? No.

REPORTER:

And have you had to issue any notices? When somebody needs to self-isolate, do you give them the notice saying...

PREMIER:

I don't think that has happened at this stage.

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

We just give them a voluntary, so we give them information so they have it in writing.

PREMIER:

So everyone is doing the right thing. That is why I ask people to continue to do the right thing.

REPORTER:

How many people have been asked to self-isolate?

PREMIER:

I'll have to look it up for you, we'll look at that for you.

REPORTER:

Premier, just in regards to the [inaudible].

PREMIER:

I don't have any details on that at the moment, sorry, I've just been... I came straight out of the meeting to this, so if you've got any other questions, I am happy to deal with them later.

REPORTER:

Just on the self-isolation, are you confident that people are doing it properly, or do you think it needs to be policed more heavily?

PREMIER:

I might get Dr Young to address that because we actually discussed that today as well, and I think it is probably very good to hear it from Chief Health Officer.

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Thank you Premier and thank you for that question, that is a very, very sensible one. Queenslanders are fantastic at responding in any crisis situation, and this is no different. We have had miniscule number of breaches, in fact, scarcely any. People have been doing absolutely the right thing, and part of that is because we're supporting them. So Red Cross have been very, very helpful in assisting people if they didn't have supplies of things, if they didn't have food, so Red Cross is providing support to all of those people, plus 13 HEALTH, our health contact centre is regularly ringing people to check that they're okay and if they don't have any symptoms. And also our police across the state have been wonderful and making sure that the people are fine. So we're up to around 2700 people, we have issued those voluntary notices to, and they've all complied, so it has been an absolutely brilliant response. And I have no concerns going forward. Queenslanders are really, really receptive to that advice about how to protect other Queenslanders.

PREMIER:

Thanks everyone.

[ENDS]

Released under RTI - 2010

Engagement: Press conference

Topic: Coronavirus

Speaker/s: Queensland Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk;
Queensland Chief Health Officer Dr Jeanette Young;
Health Minister Steven Miles

Date: 15 March 2020

Duration: 25 minutes 35 seconds

E&OE

PREMIER:

First of all I want to assure all Queenslanders that my government is doing everything in its power to minimise the fallout from this virus. We are acting on the best medical advice possible. At this point, it is critical that we all act together, and today's national cabinet meeting is an important step in that regards, and I want to thank the Prime Minister and all of the other states and territories. I have never seen such a high level cooperation like I've seen over the last few days, and it is going to continue into the future, and I want to give Queenslanders the assurance that this national cabinet meeting is working and they will continue to happen over the coming weeks and over the coming months. So, a couple of things, I want to reemphasise too what the Prime Minister; first of all about social distancing, so we're asking Queenslanders when you're out an about, no handshaking and no other social interactions such as kissing or hugging in public, lets all minimise the risk. And of course, there has been the universal self-isolation of all international arrivals, this is really important, this is something that there was unanimous agreement of by all the states and territories, and it is something that we will continue to enforce. So in relation to legislation around that, we already have legislation in place, it is under our Public Health Emergency Act, that bill was passed in early February and there are penalties for not complying with that notification, and that is around \$13,000, and to date everyone has done the right thing – we thank them for that – and of course we have random police checks as well to ensure that people are complying with that notice. Then of course, there is the really important measure, and that important measure that will come into place, and Cabinet will be considering that tomorrow and of course we are finalising those details with other states and territories as well, and that is no more gatherings of more than 500 people in a static way. So I will get Dr Young to talk a bit more about that. I know that these may seem tough measures to Queenslanders, but we have your family's interests at heart and I really need everyone to comply with this. So, the coming weeks and months ahead, it is going to be a long haul and I want to assure everyone that we have top hospitals in Queensland, we have been preparing now for over a month and we will continue to do so. We need to make sure that the most vulnerable in our community are protected, and as the Prime Minister said, we'll be discussing about aged care, vulnerable

communities over the coming days. But, now is the time for all Queenslanders to pull together, just like we do with cyclones and floods, and I have been saying this for some time, just as the way we prepare for cyclones and floods, we are preparing exactly the same way for this Coronavirus. So, please continue to listen, we will continue to provide you with regular updates, but this is absolutely important and I need everybody to be listening and responding and doing the right thing. I'll let Dr Young, and then Minister Miles say a few words, we are happy to take some questions, but can I just say the level of cooperation to date has been outstanding. Dr Young?

DR YOUNG:

Thank you Premier. Well today in Queensland we have 61 confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus, and we are working through with every single case where that person has been, we are contact tracing and we're asking Queenslanders who've been in contact with one of those cases to home quarantine. The work that has been done to date in Queensland has been fantastic. We have now worked with over 3000 travellers who've come through the border into Queensland to ask them to go into home quarantine. That request now will be extended to every single traveller who comes through the border at one of our airports into Queensland, that's the decision you've just heard, that the new national committee, the National Cabinet, has made and that will keep Queenslanders safer than if it wasn't in place. We know this virus will spread, the aim is to contain it as much as we can so that we can protect the most vulnerable in society in Queensland, and that is our aim. So we know the vast majority of people have a mild disease, it won't be a problem, but for those people in Queensland who are 60 years of age, who have one or more chronic diseases, they could have a much more serious disease and that's why we need to do all this other work, and work through it all together as we've been doing, so that we can protect those people. So I implore people, if you have parents or grandparents who are in that older age group, think about how you can help them. Maybe you can do the shopping for them, maybe you can do things to help them, maybe its not the time that your young kids go and see their grandparents, its not the time to go and visit in a aged care facility if you're unwell. So all of those things are really, really important, this is about protecting the most vulnerable in our community who are those people who are 60 years of age, or older, with one or more chronic diseases. Thank you.

MINISTER MILES:

Thanks Premier, thanks Jeanette. Queensland has been incredibly successful so far at containing this virus, as indeed has Australia, but as you've just heard, we have seen the largest single number of cases in any one day, 15 cases confirmed in the last 24 hour period, brining the total to 61. And so these new measures that the Premier has just outlined, and that have been agreed by all of the states and territories, and the commonwealth will assist us to continue to contain the disease. During this period we've been doing the important work of preparing our hospitals for if and when we do experience a wider outbreak, and Queenslanders should be well assured that our hospitals are very well prepared. Our public health teams are very experienced at contact tracing and that experience has led to their success at containing this disease so far. So that work will continue, we continue to prepare our plans, to triple emergency department capacity, to double intensive care unit capacity, so that we can care for those who will experience, or may experience the worst symptoms of this

disease. But for now, it remains contained and these new measures will allow us to continue with that containment effort.

PREMIER:

So if I could just reemphasise too, now is not the time to panic, now is the time to be calm. I can understand that Queenslanders and families are concerned and some people are rushing to the supermarkets, please there is no need to do that. We have ample supplies here in Queensland, we produce so much healthy food here, we have everything in our storage warehouses, there is no need to panic. And also too, you've got to think about your neighbours and one another, so if you're going to the supermarket and bulk-buying a months' worth of food, that could actually mean that some of our more vulnerable people in our society are not getting anything. So, let's do the right thing, let's be responsible, the shops and the supermarkets are going to remain open, we have ample supplies so everyone, let's all stay calm and think about our friends and our neighbours and our families, especially during this time. No need to panic buy. Happy to take some questions.

REPORTER:

Premier [inaudible] on Friday understand whether or not the schools will be closed in the future. Can you explain to parents why that decision hasn't been taken now [inaudible].

PREMIER:

I might get Dr Young... because that's a really good question, and look, many people have stopped and raised that issue with me, and I will get Dr Young to address that in more detail. But one of the biggest concerns would be if all of a sudden everyone stopped going to schools, that would put pressure on our health system, because our health workers would be at home, but also too, we don't want to see children placed with their grandparents as well – the most vulnerable in our community – and there is no need to stop going to school. What we have seen in some of the other states, is for example, if there has been a particular confirmation of a virus in that school, that school may close for a day or two. So we will put in place absolutely the right measures, but this has been agreed to unanimously and of course there will be further work that is done. So I might get Dr Young to address that, thanks.

DR YOUNG:

There are two times when it is really important in a pandemic to act to increase the amount of social distancing. The first time is early on in the outbreak when you don't have a lot of cases, so you need to close down the big events so that people going there who then get infected don't go back to communities and seed the virus there because it isn't in those communities. So that's early on, and that's what Australia is doing now, as of tomorrow all events of more than 500 participants have been cancelled, so that's early on in the process. Then later in the process, when you have a lot of cases and you really want to slow it down, that is when you start looking at doing broader arrangements, that's when you start thinking about is it time to close schools. Now is not the time when you do it, it is a bit further down when you've got a lot of cases and you just need to dampen it down. We're not there yet, that's where Italy is at, that's where other countries are, we're not here in Australia. And that's been agreed through a national process that Australia is not at that point that we need to

do that. Now, sometimes when you have a single case, to make it easier to manage that case, to sort all of the contacts that you need to work with, to clean the place, to do all of that, you might for a day or so, just to get on top of all of those issues, close. That is not because you are having an impact on the flow of cases during the epidemic.

REPORTER:

Where are the 15 new cases?

DR YOUNG:

They're throughout the state, the vast majority are still down here where the population is, down at the Gold Coast, so we're seeing increased numbers there, in Brisbane, because that is where our population is, so that where we'd expect to see those cases.

REPORTER:

Are there new cases in the regions though?

DR YOUNG:

There are a couple around the place, but there's only a couple. So I do have that detail and I understand that there's a press release that's actually got the very specific information and so I'd prefer that you take that from there rather than me going through each one, if that's okay?

REPORTER:

Are school sports still right to go ahead?

DR YOUNG:

It depends, its about that number of 500. So I know that the Director-General of Education has already sent out advice to every single principal across the whole state about what events are captured and what can go ahead, so there's really specific advice out there and it would be good if you could get that, and use that.

REPORTER:

We've seen people line up for drive-in tests at Caloundra Hospital, is that panic, or is that what you want to see, and where do you stand on the [inaudible] going around about the supply?

DR YOUNG:

Yes. So look, this is really, really hard for people at the moment, and I understand that, but at this point in time, here in Queensland today, the risk is if you've been overseas anywhere in the world in the last 14 days or you've been in contact with a confirmed case, that's when you need to come forward to be tested, and, as well as those two, you have symptoms – you've got respiratory symptoms or a fever of 37.5 degrees Celsius or above. Other people do not need to go and be tested. They and truly don't. So they'll have other diseases. Yes, and they should see their GP of course, and yes, they should stay home. The message is, as always, if you've got any symptoms, if you're unwell, stay home. Don't spread your germs around, and don't give them to older people who are vulnerable. But the only people who

need to be tested for COVID-19 are people who've been overseas in the last 14 days, come into contact with a confirmed case and have symptoms or a fever.

REPORTER:

In terms of your consideration for school closures, you talked about that happening when there are many more cases, is there a number to that?

DR YOUNG:

No, because we're a very, very large country and it's going to depend where we are at that point in time, where the schools are, the size of the community. There are so many variables, and it's really important that we nuance all of this. There's no point using big leavers like that if they're not appropriate and they're not going to work because, as the Premier pointed out, our schools are really, really important. They're important for the children who need to learn and be educated, and they're also important for our general workforce because that's where most parents are getting their support for childcare, and the last thing I would like to see is for those schools to close, those children to be looked after at home, by their grandparents. I think that's a real concern. Kids are best, whenever possible, to be at school, and we see that in Queensland all the time. Our education system is fantastic, it's standing up schools again as soon as possible after a flood or a cyclone, and that's what we need to do now. We should only be closing schools when there is a genuine requirement to do so.

REPORTER:

Might we see targeted closures in Brisbane, but like, not closures across Queensland, but closures in Townsville or Toowoomba [inaudible]?

DR YOUNG:

Absolutely, of course we will. This is going to be a decision made depending on the need of a particular community and the requirement there. And our state is so big that I'm sure we're going to see things happening down here in the south east corner before they happen in Cairns or in Townsville. And we'll work those through, they're really important issues.

REPORTER:

Are all of the new cases from international travellers or are there any that are community transmission?

DR YOUNG:

We do have some limited community transmission down at the Gold Coast, which we would expect. The Gold Coast saw the very first cases if you think back, it's months ago now, but they saw those first cases from China, the five individuals who came from Wuhan out of that party of 9 and they were managed there. And then we've seen then some other clusters related to the filming that's happened down there from overseas, that cluster, so we've seen a number of clusters going on at the Gold Coast. So now we're seeing some very small numbers of community transmission that we're working with all of the community there, who have done a brilliant job, to make sure that we continue to contact trace every single case.

REPORTER:

Will the screening be stepped up at the international airport?

DR YOUNG:

Yes, that happened. So that will happen tonight. So any traveller coming from overseas will be served a notice and asked to go into voluntary quarantine for 14 days from when they left the country or the place overseas, and that is really, really important to us in Queensland because the vast majority of our cases are still coming from people who have come through the border. So this is a really important initiative, and we have the capacity to be able to do this in Queensland due to the great work that we've had working with Red Cross, with police, and with our 13 health contact centre.

REPORTER:

How will that be policed and who will pay for that quarantine with people having to sort at hospital... sorry, a hotel room for two weeks, or?

DR YOUNG:

Right, so at this point in time the vast majority of people coming through the border are actually Queenslanders returning home. So they will go home to their own residence, and they'll be provided support in their own residence. So that's why we have that assistance from both Red Cross and from police and from 13 Health, to make sure that when they go to their own residence that they're able to get food and supplies, medication, etc. that they need. And we know that the numbers of travellers coming to Australia from overseas has significantly decreased. People are not coming here as tourists which is causing an enormous impact elsewhere in our economy. But they're not coming here. Business people are not coming here. So the vast majority are actually Queenslanders returning home. Those people who aren't Queenslanders returning home, they're getting given messages about, do you still want to come given you'll be spending 14 days in quarantine. So if they're requirement to come was only to be here for a week, then is there much point with that. Those people who do end up still coming, we'll then sort with them accommodation. A lot of people already have sorted it themselves or they're quite capable of sorting it themselves, so we'll work with them, make sure they've got that accommodation, make sure that they understand what home quarantine means. It means staying in that accommodation, not having visitors, and totally secluding yourself there. So we'll make sure they understand that. For people who genuinely don't have any accommodation, which is unlikely because most people come into the country and have that pre-organised, but if they don't, for whatever reason, we'll work with them to sort it out for them.

REPORTER:

A Townsville dance group yesterday alerted the public to a case on Facebook, is it creating fear or confusion among the community when it's not coming through official channels?

DR YOUNG:

Yes it can do because we've got a lot of people out there – and I know this because I get the enquiries – that think because someone's been tested, they're a case. We're testing well over 1000 Queenslanders per day, and that is fantastic. So Queenslanders have heard the call that

if they've been overseas, they develop any symptoms of if they're in home quarantine they develop any symptoms to get tested, and they're coming forward and we're testing them, and we're very, very fortunate in Queensland that we've got such enormous capacity to be able to test. But if you do test 1000 people that means that a lot of those people don't quite understand what that means and they'll say to people they're being tested, they think they have it. They don't. Out of those thousands and thousands we've tested so far, 61 are positive, which means over 5-6,000 are negative. So that's where that's coming from, so we are seeing people post information. The important thing is that people need to go to the Queensland Health website and get their information from there, not from social media. But look, I of course understand all this, it is difficult for people to follow it.

REPORTER:

There have been some different messaging out of different states around whether or not people need access to two weeks' supply of food or not, what is the advice for Queensland?

DR YOUNG:

The advice for Queensland is you do not need access to two weeks' supply of food. I have absolute confidence, as you heard earlier from the Premier, that we can produce food in Queensland. The rest of the world needs access to our food. We have plenty of food here, so there is no concern at all. If people can't get out to get food, that's a different question, and we have systems in place. If someone feels that they can't access food because they don't have any in their home because they've gone into quarantine with no notice, for instance, they can ring 13 Health and we'll organise that for them. They could of course also go online through Coles, Woolworths, etc., they all have online ordering. But, maybe that might be delayed, so ring 13 Health and something will be organised. That's a totally different question to whether or not people need to go and have two weeks' worth of food.

REPORTER:

Have Queensland Health increased elective surgeries to try and get ahead of the peak?

DR YOUNG:

Of course we have. Thank goodness the Minister made \$20 million available so that we could, in Queensland Health, go and do more elective surgery today because once the epidemic rolls out in Queensland, which it will, we won't be able to operate on people for two reasons. One, we will never operate on someone who's got a viral infection. That's no good for that individual at all, you don't operate on people when they're unwell. So that means that people who are scheduled for operations won't be able to have them because they have COVID-19. And then second reason is that we need to try and have as much capacity in our hospital system in case we need it so that if we need more capacity down the track and we can't find it, then one way of finding it, and we do that every single winter, is to delay elective surgery. So it makes sense to get on top of it and get as much done before we start seeing the epidemic roll out.

REPORTER:

And if everything goes to plan, when will we see the peak of this flattening?

DR YOUNG:

It depends how successful we are at engaging with every single person in Queensland, all five million people in Queensland, to do their bit. If they do their bit, I don't know when we'll see that peak because it'll be delayed, which is absolutely fantastic. The longer we can contain and delay this virus going out across our state, the more time we have to be prepared in our hospitals so we can give the absolute best treatment to every single Queensland, and the more time our very clever scientists have to develop a vaccine.

REPORTER:

Do Queensland GPs have enough personal protective equipment?

DR YOUNG:

They do. If they don't have enough they need to go to their local primary healthcare network who does. So the Commonwealth is regularly sending out supplies to every single primary healthcare network across the country, and there are supplies there, and I know because I meet twice a week, or one of my team meets twice a week with all the leads from those primary healthcare networks. So the message is if, as a GP, you don't have the surgical masks you need, go to your primary healthcare network, they have them.

PREMIER:

And I'll just finish, Dr Young, just by reassuring Queenslanders that we are listening – and it's collectively, as states and territories – to the best medical health advice with dealing with the novel coronavirus pandemic. So of course we'll be updating you over the coming weeks and coming months and the Cabinet subcommittee on health will meet tomorrow before Cabinet, and Parliament of course will also be operating this week as well so it'll be business as usual. Okay. Thank you.

[ENDS]



Program: Press Conference

Interviewee: Queensland Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk; Chief Health Officer Dr Jeannette Young and Health Minister Steven Miles

Airdate: Friday 20th March 2020

Duration: 20 minutes 54 seconds

E&OE

PREMIER:

First of all today, I want to say that, if you were told to go into quarantine, you must stay there for 14 days. We have been doing this since day one. And it is absolutely important that you do not leave those premises and go to the shops or go to the movies or go shopping. You must stay in your home and not move for those 14 days. And I'll make sure our Chief Health Officer, Dr Young, addresses that issue in a bit more detail. One of the main issues we discussed today was the issue in relation to our Torres Strait Islanders and our Indigenous communities. It is very important that we protect, during this time, some of the most vulnerable members of our community. We know that many of our members of indigenous communities have some underlying health issues and, if you're over 50, the impacts of coronavirus for people from Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander communities could be quite severe. So, today, I am forwarding to the Commonwealth a list of discreet indigenous communities across Queensland where there will be restricted access for these communities. Now yesterday, myself, the Health Minister, the Deputy Premier - who's also Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs - we spoke to the mayors. And the mayors were very supportive of this measure. I want to thank the leadership of the mayors, of their communities, because we have never asked you to do this before. At times, different communities have had to be isolated for a period of time because of cyclones, and they're all very well-prepared for cyclones, but now we've asked them to do this. And there was absolutely no hesitation. We'll be forwarding the list to the Commonwealth of the communities, but they include most of the Cape communities, of course, Torres Strait Island, Cherbourg - I've got the whole list here that we'll go through and pass on to everyone. We want to leave - these will be put in place as quickly as possible, of course, and of course only essential travel will be allowed. What do I mean by "essential"? I mean things like emergency services personnel, medical, supplies of food. It's very important that we put in these protective measures now. It is absolutely critical at this particular point in time. And I really want to thank the work that we've done cooperatively with the Northern Territory and also with Western Australia. The Northern Territory has put in measures across the border with Queensland and we will look at matching those measures with the Northern Territory so we don't have a lot of people that would cross that border. So effectively, we'll be putting up a border restriction across the west of the state. So I want to thank everyone for that. We also took onboard the concerns of many members of this community as well - these communities - about some of their children are in boarding schools. We are going to endeavour - where possible - over the next week - to return children home to community if that is possible. So

I'd make that commitment that we will do everything in our power subject to available aircraft to get children and, where it is not possible, we will make sure a lot of them are in boarding schools - we'll make sure we talk to the different schools to see what other measures we can put in place there.

So that's a very important decision that Queensland has made today. So I hope everyone's realising how serious this issue is. This is incredibly serious and the next thing I'm going to say, I want everyone to take heed of. And that is no more than 100 people in indoor gatherings, which is four square metres, that Dr Young will address in more detail. This is about social distancing. This is about being physically away from every other person. Now, I know many of you would be thinking - it's a Friday afternoon, it's beautiful weather, "I'm going to have a big night out." Guess what - now is not the time to do it. I'm sorry to the pubs out there right across the state. I don't want you to be having a big night out this weekend to anybody. This is the time now we need everybody - go home, be with your family, sit on your back deck, have a glass of wine, spend time with your kids, talk to your friends, but, honestly, now is not the time. This is the time where we need to curb - make sure that we are stemming that flow, making sure we're flattening that curve, and making sure that we are having less physical interactions and contacts with people. That is absolutely critical. Let me say that again. It is absolutely critical, during this course of time - and we can make a big difference here, everyone. If we all pitch in and do this together, we can make a huge difference. As I've said time and time again, these are uncharted territories, uncharted waters. We haven't had to go through this before. Now is the time for patience, for calm, and for decent common sense. And in any rule book, when you're facing a pandemic, there is no common sense in going to the pub and having a big night with your mates this weekend.

Alright. I now want to address another important issue. And that is - members of our community who are 60 and over who have one or more underlying health chronic disease. This is very important. We know that this virus has a big impact on our most vulnerable. We've taken very good measures to look after our aged care. Now we also need to look at the most vulnerable members in our community. It is absolutely important that people in this category are limiting their social interaction. If you do not need to go out, don't go out. You should only be going out if it is an essential thing you need to do, such as grocery shopping or going to the chemist. But, honestly, now is not the time to be spending - if you are in that category, to be spending very close personal contact time with your grandchildren. And I know Gladys Berejiklian said this morning that she is not seeing her parents, and that's a very difficult decision. I'm telling you now - I am not seeing my parents. I am not seeing my parents. This is how important it is. And now, I'm asking my parents not to see their grandchildren for a short period of time, to Skype with them, to ring them up by phone, but this is absolutely critical, everyone - we're talking about now protecting our most vulnerable.

And I don't want to get to the situation in a month's time when you're saying, "Oh, if only I hadn't done that." We're taking every measure we can. Every single measure we can. And finally, our Queensland Disaster Management Group will meet in approximately 30 minutes. This is all of our State Government agencies working together to make sure that we are continuing to plot our path through this incredible journey that we are facing in Queensland. And finally, the Prime Minister said today we all have a role. And that is absolutely true. Let me say that again. Every single one of us has a role. And our role is to limit our social

interaction. Do not go out unless it is essential. Do not go out unless you have to go out. Now is not the time to be having a big weekend. Now is the time to be spending it with your family. I'll hand over to Dr Young and then Steven will say a few words.

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Good afternoon. So, we don't have a vaccine at this stage for this virus. We don't have any therapeutics. But what we do have is five million Queenslanders who always come together and work together. What we all - every single one of us - needs to do now, is to follow the advice. It's really firm advice. If you're being asked to go into quarantine because you've come through the border or you've come into contact with a case or there's any issue, that means exactly that. That means going home for 14 days and not having visitors, and not leaving the home. We are so lucky in Queensland we have got support throughout our system. If someone's in quarantine, and they need help, they just need to pick up the phone and ring 13-HEALTH. And 13-HEALTH will organise food deliveries if they can't get food. They will organise pharmaceutical drug deliveries if they can't get the medications they're normally on. So that will be sorted. They'll organise healthcare if that's needed. It's so important - if you're asked to go into quarantine, that's what you're being asked to do. Because we know that people going into quarantine are the people most at risk of getting the infection, and we don't want them to spread it to other people prior to them knowing they've got the disease and being tested. So that's the first group.

The second group - and this group is even, in actual fact, more important - that's the people we're asking to go into isolation. The difference is, we ask you to go into isolation if you're either being tested for the novel coronavirus infection, or you have been confirmed to have it. So, as soon as someone does the test on you, you will be told you must isolate yourself. You must go home and not come into contact with anyone in your household or with anyone else until you get the result. If the result is negative, that's fine - you can do what you would normally do. If it's positive, you're then a confirmed case and you are, therefore, required to stay there until you've recovered.

Again, that's really critical. If you don't know what to, do ring 13-HEALTH. They will assist you with getting any pharmaceutical supplies, any food you need, any support you need. You are not to come out of your home unless you need healthcare and call an ambulance. So that's if you deteriorate and you can't manage your disease at home. Reminding people that 80% of people are going to have a very mild disease. They'll be at home for that period. Lots of movies. Lots of books. Be at home. And there won't be a problem. 20% - and they will mainly be those people over age 60, with one or more chronic diseases, high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, lung disease - are the main ones. Or, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who are 50 years and over. They're the ones who are most likely to end up with severe disease, and it usually happens after day five or six of developing symptoms. So, if they develop that severe disease, to call an ambulance, to really and truly - if they don't know what to do, ring 13-HEALTH, and get advice.

So they're the groups that it's really important. Then, for all the rest of us, to protect ourselves. So those people are protecting the whole community by not going out. But for the rest of us who are well, who are out there in the community, to protect each one of us, what we need to do is maintain that 1.5 metre distance. So I think people know 1.5 metres - so

maintain that between other people, because that's the distance that you can get infected if someone is unwell. So, really, maintain that. And that's why those requirements about gatherings have been brought in. It's all about numbers. It sounds very clinical, but it's about numbers. The fewer interactions you have with other people, the less likely you are to get the infection. So that requirement for people to gather in the one space - for less than 100 people to be in that one space - and in that one space, you don't want 100 people in a tiny little room - so you need to have four square metres per person in that small space so that you are able to maintain that distance.

And then outside, in the open air, it's about having less than 500 people. Because, again, you don't want to have too many people mingling. Because one person in a gathering of 500 - if you're all moving around and talking to each other and interacting, is a risk for those 500 people. So that's why those requirements have been put in place for 500 and for 100. So all of these things are being done to protect all of us. Plus, just get in the habit of washing your hands, making sure that after you've been touching anything, that you wash your hands, clean your hands, try not to touch your face - it's really, really hard not to do that, which is why we've got the message of washing your hands. I could just see here, while I was looking here at all of you, a number of you were touching your face. It's so, so hard not to do that. So, wash your hands, maintain that 1.5 metre distance, stay home if you've got any symptoms. Just stay home and keep your germs to yourself. Thank you.

MINISTER MILES:

Today, we're confirming 40 further positive cases of COVID-19 in Queensland, bringing the total number so far to 184. The Chief Health Officer has just outlined how there is no vaccine and no treatment for this disease. Fortunately, most of the new cases continue to be in the south-east. The only tools we have to reduce the spread of this disease are reducing the contact with people who have it. That's why, first of all, people we know who have it need to be isolated, either in hospital or at home. People who we suspect could have been in contact with it - either because they've been overseas or in contact with someone who's infected, need to be quarantined for 14 days. But for the entire community, we need to reduce the number of people every person has contact with every single day. And if we do that, we will be able to reduce the rate of infection, reduce the number of people infected by each positive case. That's why these additional social-distancing measures are so important. We've already heard about mass gatherings outdoors and mass gatherings indoors. But by reducing the density of people in rooms, we can reduce the level of contact between people. So that means, for events indoors, you cannot have more than one person per four square metres. Four square metres is about the size of the tray of a ute. It's about the size of a Queen-bed doona. If you are planning to hold an event, work out how many square metres the venue is, divide it by four, and that is the maximum number of people you can have in that space. As the Premier says, this is not a weekend to go out. This is a weekend to watch the Broncos win tonight on TV, spend the weekend relaxing at home, enjoying the fantastic Queensland weather, and reducing the number of people you have contact with.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

PREMIER:

I'll let Dr Young talk about that, but that's something that would be considered in the future. Once there is a high lot of community transmission - we're not at that stage yet. So most of ours have been from overseas. I also want to reiterate that Queensland was the first state that, from day one, we have been testing and contact-tracing from day one. So I'm very confident of the figures that we have. But I might get Dr Young to address that point.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

PREMIER:

Yes, as the Prime Minister indicated, the decision was taken by the Prime Minister and all the state and territory first ministers that our budgets would be pushed back to another time in the year. I don't have an exact date yet, but I think everybody would understand that it is absolutely impossible to give any forecasts when we don't know the final implications. So, at the moment, I know the Deputy Premier and Treasurer is working very much on further packages that we will be announcing over coming weeks, and we are looking especially at some household assistance as well to families.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

PREMIER:

I can't say at the moment, I'm sorry. I just don't have that information on me, Sarah.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

PREMIER:

Look, my message is everyone needs to take this absolutely seriously. You can't see the virus. It's a bit like when you can't see a cyclone coming until it arrives. And I think people only have to see the images that are happening around the world that no-one is immune to this. It's happening in nearly every other country. So, we are preparing, but we need to take some measures now that will help flatten that curve and will help protect lives. So I'm asking Queenslanders to do something they've never done before. This is like being hit by 30 cyclones at once. It is a moving feast and, as you know, we're giving updates as quickly as possible. And I've said to you before that the National Cabinet is working incredibly well. But so are our agencies. So in Queensland, we can do everything we can to prepare and, as we do with cyclones and floods, people listen to the messages and they respond. And I'm asking now Queenslanders to respond to the very key measures that we are saying, based on expert health advice.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

PREMIER:

Very firm.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

PREMIER:

I think what we're seeing is, and it's been told to me by people living in other states as well that there seems to be this element of business as usual, especially when you get out of the city and go into the suburbs. What we need people to do is to do this social distancing. We haven't had to do this before. We've never had to say don't come near us, don't shake hands. This is what we are confronting and this is what we have to do. The health advice says we have to limit our social interactions, we can't shake hands, we have to wash our hands regularly and we have to keep our distance from people. And that means the way we live our lives has to change. That means you can't go to the beach and sit on top of each other, that's not social distancing. We're asking people to change now, because the consequences will be brutal if we don't make these changes today.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

PREMIER:

Schools are classified, just as many workplaces, as essential places... essential workplaces, so in relation to schools the expert advice is very clearly that they can continue, and this is something that we are monitoring every week. I want every parent to know that we are monitoring this situation on a regular basis, and at the moment all of the expert advice is that schools should remain open, and that is the view then of the Prime Minister and every first minister of the country.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] over the last two days, what does that mean [inaudible]?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

It is. Yesterday we saw 50 new cases, today we saw 40 new cases. So we are seeing new cases. But the vast majority of those cases are down in the south east corner where our population is, where we'd expect them to be, and also the vast majority due to people coming in through the border or contacts of people coming in. So we now are seeing more people returning home to Queensland from overseas, which is a good thing, but they're coming from countries where they're seeing increased numbers of cases. So it's really important that every single person who comes through the border into one of our airports from overseas goes into that 14 days of quarantine. That's absolutely critical, and we are at the border handing all of those people quarantine orders.

REPORTER:

What do you know about this situation with the cruise ship [inaudible] New South Wales, [inaudible] people on board there who've come [inaudible]?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

So I've just spoken to my colleague in New South Wales about that. We are being provided, as we speak here, all of the names and contact details of all of those people who have returned to Queensland. They have already all been told that they must go straight into quarantine in their homes, so they're doing that. Once we get the list of names we'll be contacting them to make sure that they understand that that is what they must do.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

No, that is the process we've put in place. We all believe that it is far, far better that people quarantine in their own homes wherever that is possible. So through all of this process, right from day one, for people who come in who are required to go into quarantine can travel on to their final destination. That's been put into place right from the start because it's just critical that people get to their homes. Of course, not if they're sick. So there are health checks done and if people are unwell, have any symptoms at all, they get checked. But if they're well, they're able to travel on, then if they become unwell later, we go back and contact trace the 24 hours prior to them having their symptom. So that's been in place right from the start. We're aware of that, and that's what's been occurring. Now unfortunately these people who are on the cruise ship, it wasn't discovered until they'd all left the cruise ship that they did have cases on board, so that's why they're all being contacted by NSW to tell them that they need to go into home quarantine, and it's just a matter of when they were receiving those phone calls. So we're getting that information and we'll be contact people as well.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

We have been given enormous support. So I've had retired doctors coming forward offering their assistance, we're providing rapid training for contact tracing, we're utilising medical students, we're utilising a whole range of people – other government agencies have provided their support, so I'm very, very confident that we will be able to continue doing all that work to follow up cases and to contact trace.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

I'm not aware of anyone who's needed to go into ICU. Of course there was that very unfortunate lady who died when she travelled from Queensland down to Sydney and was unable to be resuscitated.

REPORTER:

Dr, do we have any information about the rugby, the UQ rugby function with the Sydney patients who had it?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

I don't know about that particular example. If you send that through to the media team we can find out about it.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] back to schools, [inaudible] health advice says that it's fine for them to go ahead, is there a threshold where you would start considering advising the Government that maybe it needs to [inaudible]?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Yes, and we're working that through at the moment nationally. So I meet with my colleagues every single day from Queensland time from 1 o'clock to 3 o'clock to work out all those questions because there are so many of them. And we've never, nowhere in the world, has lives through a pandemic due to a novel coronavirus to the extent that this one has occurred, so we're all working these out rapidly but collegiately so that we have that agreement and that understanding across the country, so that specific question we're addressing at the moment. It's a very sensible one.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

PREMIER:

Look, NAPLAN has been cancelled. That was a decision by all of the Education Ministers across the nation. As Dr Young said, everyone is reviewing all of that information about schools and if there's any change, you'll be the first to know.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

PREMIER:

I said over the next couple of weeks.

REPORTER:

Premier, do you have any other details about clusters, do you know any specifics on the UQ, the cruise ship, other ones like that?

PREMIER:

Not at this stage but I'll get Dr Young to have a look at that for you, but like I said we'll be doing all of our contact tracing but it is absolutely important that if anyone is feeling sick or unwell that they stay home because if they do have the virus and they go out into the workplace then they can transmit that. So it's absolutely crucial that everyone plays their part. If we all work together, we'll get through it.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

PREMIER:

I think people need to be sensible. Everyone just needs to be sensible. So go and do what you need to do. So if you need to go and do your shopping, that's perfectly normal. If you need to go to the pharmacy, that's perfectly normal. But if you are going to go to a party, maybe reconsider, because it's that close contact. You know, everyone's seen those images in Ireland where those people were told not to have close contact and they were all dancing and doing karaoke and everything like... now is not the time for that. Once we get through this, go crazy, but, for now, let's do everything because I don't want to get to the stage in a month's time and say if only we had done that, if only we had done this. So I'm asking the media to please get this key message out to everyone for this weekend, let's all be sensible and do the right thing. Let's protect one another and make sure we're practising that social distancing and to make sure that we are having less contacts than what we would usually do on any given day or weekend.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

PREMIER:

Yeah, I know this is unprecedented times. It's absolutely unprecedented times. We've been having briefings from the Reserve Bank, the Prime Minister has been given all of the states and territories updated briefings as well, and everybody is trying to do everything they possibly can, and I think what you'll see is a big effort from the country, focused on people and focused on their jobs and their livelihoods. And it's happening internationally, it's not just unique to Australia. So all of the measures that we're putting in place and we will put in place is about looking after people and getting them through the next six months, the initial six months.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]



PREMIER:

I'll have to find out for you. And last one, I really have to go to our meeting.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

PREMIER:

Yeah, I said that what we would be doing is a lot of families would like their children to come back to Community, and where it is possible to facilitate that, we will endeavour to do so, but there may be some cases where we can't do that. So we'll be talking to the boarding schools about alternative arrangements that can be put into place.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

PREMIER:

Well, we might have to charter... we'll have to look at all of those options because everyone knows there's not much even domestic travel at the moment. So everyone, let's do the right thing, let's get through it together.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

PREMIER:

I know, isn't it wonderful. Well done, and can I just say, now is the time to help our neighbours, and if we had more people like Mike the better the world would be. So if you can help a neighbour, drop them a note in their letterbox or drop it around the suburb if you can help out in some way. There are some people that probably can't get out and do their shopping. There's a lot of people that need help at this time and I'm quite sure that some people that have got some spare time on their hands can probably give a hand as well. Thank you.

[ENDS]



Station: 7 News Periscope

Program: Press Conference

Interviewee: Health Minister Steven Miles, Chief Health Officer Dr Jeanette Young

Date: 21 March 2020

Duration: 24mins 21secs

E&OE

MINISTER STEVEN MILES:

...positive cases to 221. It's incredibly important that everybody in Queensland follows the advice of Jeanette Young, our fantastic Chief Health Officer and all of our public health staff. There were some reports last night about venues not following the density cap of 1 person per 4 square meters and it's incredibly important that pubs and clubs and bars and restaurants take steps to ensure that there is physical distance, sufficient physical distance between parties at their events and we will continue to work with them and provide advice to them but at this time it's just incredibly important that everyone in our community follows that advice. If we work together, if we stick together we will be able to keep more people out of hospital. We will be able to keep more people alive and that's ultimately our objective here. We can also confirm that amongst those 37 cases was one person who had supervised children at a YMCA-run outside of school hours care facility on the Gold Coast at Helensvale and our public health staff are working through contacting all of those parents who may have come into contact with that individual and provide them with health information. They will all be required to quarantine for 14 days. Again, this just underlines how incredibly important it is that we all work together. That all of us follow that health advice if we've been overseas or if we've been in contact with somebody confirmed to have COVID-19. Chief Health Officer Jeanette Young is doing just a fantastic job leading an incredible team of people right across the state and I'll ask her to add some remarks.

DR JEANETTE YOUNG:

Thankyou Minister. Yes all of our hospitals and health services are fully prepared. Here at the Prince Charles Hospital they have their fever clinic running and they're assessing people. A lot of the people they're assessing are people who are coming through the border. They're coming through the airport in Brisbane and they're returning from overseas. So they come through, they get assessed, if they're unwell they're brought here and they get checked. They go into isolation until they get the results of the test that are done and they then, if they're well and those results come back negative they have to remain in home quarantine for 14 days and that is so important. We're seeing large numbers of Queenslanders coming home from overseas which is very very important. This is the place to be now, it's the time to be with family. So the people coming home from overseas need to go into quarantine for 14 days. People who actually have the infection, have COVID-19 virus need to go into isolation.

That's different. So quarantine you're well, so you can continue to engage with your household. You can't have visitors. You can't go out but you can continue to be with people in your home but if you then do get the infection those people you've been with will then have to go into quarantine. Once you have the infection, if you get it, once you get it then you are in isolation. That's different to quarantine. Isolation means you can't come into contact with anyone else. In your home, you can't because you'll give it to them. We know that, that's the riskiest environment to be with people sharing a home so you absolutely need to be isolated. You cannot have visitors. You absolutely under any circumstance must not leave your home. We have support for you, we won't abandon anyone of course we won't. please, if you're isolation ring 13 HEALTH. So if you want any help. If you can't get access to food supplies because you haven't been able to get them online, whatever the reason. Doesn't matter. Just ring 13 HEALTH. If you can't get access to your normal medications and you need them ring 13 HEALTH. Our pharmacy guild has a system in place to home deliver medications which has been a brilliant piece of work on their part. So really don't go out. There is no excuse. The only time you should be leaving your home if you're in isolation is if you need healthcare and ring an ambulance or ring 13 HEALTH if you don't know what to do and know how to get that healthcare. I do know of course, a lot of these people, in fact 80 per cent of people who are in isolation will be actually quite well. They'll have very minor symptoms. They'll want to go out, but please I do ask of you don't because just because you don't feel too sick with this doesn't mean you can't spread it. In fact, you will spread it. So for the 80 per cent of people who actually quite reasonably well with COVID-19 disease it's really really really important. I can't overstress that, that you stay inside so you protect the community and you stay away from other people in your household. And please, don't give it to your older relatives because they won't be one of that 80 per cent. They'll get severe disease so we must protect our older members of our community. Anyone aged 60 years of age or older with one or more chronic diseases in particular. Those diseases that I'm really particularly concerned about are high blood pressure, diabetes, lung disease or heart disease. If you're aged 60 or older with one of those diseases you're at risk so protect yourself. Really and truly, that's very important. If you're one of our First Nations people, if you're an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander then that age to be concerned is 50 years of age or older. So of course, this then all applies in multitudes for going into any of our residential aged care facilities. Please don't visit those facilities if you've got any sign of anything. Any symptom at all. If your temperature's 37.5 degrees Celsius or above please don't go and visit. That's just absolutely critical. And when you do go and visit limit your contact. I know I've been in residential aged care facilities when I've had relatives in there and it's always lovely to go in to the community area and catch up with different people and see how they're going. That's not....this is just not the time to do it. Only go and see your own relative and only go in 2 people at a time and limit your visit to once a day. We've really got to protect our older members of our community here in Queensland. Thankyou.

REPORTER:

Inaudible

MINISTER MILES:

So the Department of Communities in every natural disaster sets up that hotline so that they can provide support to people who need it. They've activated it now and anyone across Queensland who needs assistance as we deal with what is a health emergency, anyone who needs assistance can contact that number. Of course, if they're in any doubt and they want health advice then the number to call is 13 HEALTH.

REPORTER:

Minister last night, or yesterday afternoon, the Premier was pretty [inaudible] with her comments saying she didn't want anyone to go out this weekend and have a big night. We had cameras in the Valley last night and there was still hundreds of people in pubs and bars, close together, what would your message be to them? It's Saturday night.

MINISTER MILES:

My message to the proprietors of those venues is that there are really simple things that they can do to comply with what is now the law. It is now the law that they can not have more than 100 people in a single space and that they can not have more than 1 person per 4 square metres. They need to comply with that and I'm sure that as we get more information out to them about how they can, they will. I know a lot of...while there's some venues that perhaps didn't, a lot of others did. This also comes down to all of us doing the right thing. All of us following the advice. If you go to a venue and it is crowded then you should know it's not good for your health or the health of the other people there. If you're going to stay there go somewhere less crowded. Go home as the Premier says. I spent last night watching the football on the couch with my family. One of my mates thought it would be funny to send over a 6 pack of Coronas so I had a Corona and watched the Broncos have a win and I think that message from the Premier about spending time at home, spending time with your loved ones it's exactly how we're going to make it through this health emergency.

REPORTER:

Who's policing the rules [inaudible] and why would those venues [inaudible]?

MINISTER MILES:

The venues themselves are responsible for complying with those laws and we are working through now, processes where we can communicate to them directly about their responsibilities and over time, if we have to we will move to that level of enforcement but we hope we don't have to. We hope, in fact I know, that venues and Queenslanders want to do the right thing. They want to work together to fight this thing to keep particularly our older Queenslanders, our grandparents safe. So as we get that information out to folk, I'm sure people will comply. Perhaps some younger people didn't go home to watch the 6 o'clock news before they went out last night. I'm sure now that there is more information out a lot more people will be able to comply tonight and tomorrow.

REPORTER:

On the Queensland case, it seems that the person according to the school had had symptoms and was still going along to do day care. Is that a bit cavalier? Should people be staying home if they have symptoms?

**MINISTER MILES:**

Our understanding is that that is the case. That they were at work for some number of days and I think it just really underlines the message that we're trying to get out. That all of us have a responsibility to each other and if you're unwell, particularly if you have contact with a lot of people then you should seek health advice. I know Jeanette has more details so I might ask if she wants to add.

DR YOUNG:

You're absolutely right. If anyone in our society anywhere in our society has a fever of 37.5 degrees Celsius or above or any symptoms of cough, sore throat, any of those symptoms then they really need to stay home. That's normal advice. So at the moment more cases will actually be due to flu than will be due coronavirus but it doesn't matter. The risks are still there. We don't want any respiratory viruses circulating in our community. Now anyone who's come back from overseas in the last 14 days and of course, now we have processes in place at the border to notify people. They have to go into quarantine. They've only come in place more recently so there are still some people out there in the community who returned before that requirement was put in place but they need to be particularly vigilant. If they get any symptoms – fever or any respiratory symptoms they need to stay home and seek advice. But it's the same advice really for everyone. And as we see more cases through our community, through Queensland then people are just going to have to if they have any symptoms they're going to have isolate themselves and get tested. That's absolutely critical.

REPORTER:

And what would you say to those people we heard about, out and about going to cafes, restaurants, going to bars, nightclubs or markets?

DR YOUNG:

That requirement came into place on Friday so I can understand how not everyone picked it up Friday night so we're just getting more and more of that messaging out. The advice is that everyone should be wherever possible trying to maintain a one and a half metre distance and inside that's been translated into that 4 square metres so 2x2. So to really make it as safe and as simple to understand as possible. So there's that 2 requirements that people should have less than 100 people in any enclosed space no matter how big or small that enclosed space is, it's a maximum of 100 people but then you also have to have the secondary requirements of the 4 square metres per person in that space. So in your own homes this applies. If you in your own homes have areas you should think "how many people can safely fit in this area?". Not your own family right. This is if you're having visitors coming into your home who don't normally live there you should think about that 4 square metres and that size, that's really important.

REPORTER:

Is there a concern about the number of masks available to hospital nurses? There's been some complaints around that.

DR YOUNG:

There is absolutely no concern for the public health system about the stocks of personal protective equipment we have. It is really important that it's treated as a precious resource because it is and as soon as I went to our hospitals and went "Look, I want you to be a bit careful with how you're using our stocks of personal protective equipment" they immediately took that on board and used them very sensibly. Things as simple as, you don't need three people to see each person in the fever clinic. One person can do that effectively and that immediately reduces your need for personal protective equipment by three. That's just a very simple example but we have absolutely got sufficient stock so we can appropriately use personal protective equipment so all our staff and our community is safe. I have no concerns about it.

REPORTER:

Dr Young, you saw or you may have heard some councils are now shutting down local libraries. Why are they being shut and schools aren't?

DR YOUNG:

Because it's a totally different situation. You've got to remember that information I gave earlier on in this discussion here about who's at risk. The people at risk are those people who are aged 60 years or older with one or more chronic diseases. That's high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease or lung disease or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who are 50 years or over and one of those four particular conditions. They're the people at risk and they're the people who tend to use our libraries. They're the people who are going to our libraries and they're there and they're a risk group. The other group that tends to use our libraries because they're a great community resource. I think the libraries we have in Queensland are fantastic. The other group that tends to use those libraries are the younger kids before they actually get into the school system and it's just not wise to have those different groups. And also, we are saying that for our older residents in our community, this time it's actually safest for them to be at home, to not be mingling, to not go out. So yes, I understand that a lot of our councils have made that decision and they've made the decision because they want to make the safest decision for their community. I think it is a community by community decision. I think it will vary at different times in the state. So at the moment we're seeing the vast majority of our cases down in the south east corner. In the Gold Coast, in Brisbane, in Sunshine Coast so I know there are libraries there that are making that decision. We're not seeing cases in other parts of the state so this a time that every single community, I know it is hard for them and I recognise the difficult decisions they're having to make, but every single community needs to make the best decisions for their own community. That's really important.

REPORTER:

Just on the uni students. Obviously a lot of the uni's have closed. We've spoken to a few uni students who are quite concerned because they're still having to do prac inside hospitals where patients are being treated for COVID. They haven't even finished their degrees. Should uni students still be doing their pracs inside hospitals at the moment?

DR YOUNG:

Of course they should. Our uni students are among the most intelligent people in the world. They know how to use personal protective equipment and how to protect themselves, how to protect patients. That's part of their core training and that's done very early on so they need to be there. They need to be there training so they're our next generation. We've got to remember we're going to have health system to manage next year and the year after so all of our health students are out there. And indeed, I've had so many inquiries from health students who want to help even more so we're working with them, how they can help us in our system to respond. They're a critical part of what we're doing.

REPORTER:

There's a concern about the number of carers for people with disabilities maybe getting sick and that sort of thing, are there any contingency plans?

DR YOUNG:

Yes. So in all areas in society business continuity plans are being put in place. That's critical. So we do that extremely well in Queensland. Unfortunately every summer we always have some natural disaster somewhere in the state so for any state, we're probably the best at managing this in the country so we know how to business continuity plans into place and it's not different. It's no different whether you've got fewer staff because they can't get to work because the roads are flooded or there's a cyclone or whether you've fewer staff because they can't get work because they're unwell. So that's all in place and it's actually been in place for many weeks, months already.

REPORTER:

Looking at international examples, overseas where they've got more cases they've had to increase restrictions. China has advised Italy that isn't not taking things seriously because it still has public transport running. Aren't we sort of, delaying the inevitable of having bigger shut downs to control this and what's in consideration? Are we looking at domestic travel, are hospitals looking at expanding and taking over whole floors to manage this case loads?

DR YOUNG:

All of that work's being done so that's all part of our planning and we have all that planning in place for every possible contingency. I suspect we won't need them but that's what we do every single time. Every single time when we've got an incident in Queensland we don't just think what we're doing now or next week or next month, we think right through. What might we need right through and what are the extreme possibilities that we might need to be prepared for and we always have that, it's no different to what we do. Indeed, our Cabinet met and did a whole range of exercises that we had everything as well fine tuned as we possibly could.

REPORTER:

How far are we off non-essential services closing? Like pubs and [inaudible].

DR YOUNG:

It depends how we go. At the moment we're seeing that small number of increase in cases each day. We had 50, we had 40, then today 37. So we're hovering around those numbers which means we're keeping it under control, we've got it in hand. We'll just keep monitoring that every single day, in fact we monitor it all through the day. 24 hours a day and we'll just keep looking at where that's going so then what additional things do we need to put in place.

REPORTER:

Is limiting domestic travel one of those things given you can't control what Victoria does or New South Wales does?

DR YOUNG:

All of those things are up for discussion. I meet with my colleagues around the country at 1 o'clock Queensland time every single day and we spend most days 2 hours discussing all of these things. So we are one country and we're sorting all of this out together and we're all sharing information because we all have different expertise. We have different issues, we have different concerns so we're just working through and that's a very collegiate group.

REPORTER:

There's a report this morning that a successful trial has been undertaken that a malaria drug that could be rolled out to hospitals across the country. Do you have any information about that?

DR YOUNG:

I do. I'm not sure I would call it successful at this stage, it could be and that would be fantastic. It's one drug that's been looked at, we're actually looking at quite a few drugs. But so far there hasn't been anything that's really stood out as this is going to be successful. But we've working with our colleague overseas, our Chief Medical Officer Professor Murphy talks on a regular basis if not daily with his colleagues in the United States, the United Kingdom, China to get all that information. So we're getting all of that first hand and we are aware of certain drugs that there's been some suggestion they might be useful so we're exploring all of them and we've got trials.

REPORTER:

The doctor that supposedly was going around seeing Queensland Health when he, potentially had coronavirus, what is your response to that this morning?

DR YOUNG:

Sorry which?

REPORTER:

The doctor that came from overseas and was treating people and had symptoms and didn't isolate after coming in? It was on the front page of the Courier Mail this morning.

DR YOUNG:

I'm sorry, I haven't actually got to the Courier Mail. I apologise, maybe....sorry Minister.



MINISTER MILES:

I was just going to say, I'll just give...it's incredibly important that everybody follows this advice. It's especially important that our medical professionals do and we're doing our best to make sure that they have all of that information.

REPORTER:

Is there a vaccine funding, what are doing with Feds on this?

MINISTER MILES:

Look I understand Greg Hunt has done a press conference today and outlined some details about Federal Government funding for vaccines. Of course we welcome that and we will work together as we have been.

ENDS

Released under RTI - DPC



Format: Press conference

Speaker/s: Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk; Education Minister Grace Grace; Chief Health Officer Jeanette Young; Health Minister Steven Miles

Airdate: 23 March 2020

Duration: 18 minutes

E&OE

PREMIER:

... across all of the states meet, and then they provide their advice, their expert advice to the National Cabinet. Today I can confirm that Queensland will, of course, be agreeing to the restricted openings from midday today of pubs, registered and licensed clubs, gyms and indoor sporting venues, cinemas, entertainment venues, casinos, nightclubs, and restaurants and cafes will have to operate by takeaway. These are tough measures, and I talked yesterday about some tough love and there will be more that'll be rolled out over the coming weeks and months. Can I please urge everyone to do the right thing, we must be doing the social distancing, you must be at least 1.5 metres away from each other, and of course we know that if we are all playing our part, and we're all working together, we can absolutely get through this, I am absolutely convinced we can get through this. So of course the other issue that people have raised is about schools, and I've got the Chief Health Officer here, Dr Young, to address that in more detail, but schools will remain open. Parents have a choice, if they choose not to send their child to school, they can make that choice, but schools will remain open. I also want to reiterate to parents out there, that we have been doing everything possible since the end of January, we have been testing, testing, testing. We have been making sure that we are contact tracing as much as possible. We are making sure that we are getting a... that we are doing everything that the community expects us to do. And we are in a different stage to some of the other states as well, so I want to stress that to the communities. Also recognise Queensland is a very decentralised state, some parts of our state don't have any numbers of coronavirus at the moment and of course some have very, very minimal numbers, but we are watching this every single day, and if the expert health advice changes, the of course we will change. I just want to make sure that everybody knows that. So, also we know that the school break is coming up in a couple of weeks' time. I want to send a very clear message to people, I want to send a very clear message to people to stay in your state and stay in your suburb. There is no school holidays, it is not about packing up the car and going to the beach for a picnic or going for a swim on the beach, its not about going camping, packing the family and going camping, this is about staying in your suburb. I need everyone to listen to this advice, and it is going to be really tough, I mean Queensland has some of the best weather and it is going to be very hard for people. But we have to do it because this virus can spread and we are now focussing on containing that spread to lessen that curve. I might get

the Education Minister to say a few words, and then Steven and Dr Young, and then we're happy to take questions.

MINISTER GRACE:

Thank you, as the Premier stated, schools are open today and they will remain open until our school break starts, the last school day is the 3rd of April. However, parents can choose whether or not they wish to send their children to school, however if they do, they must be responsible for three things: to advise the school please if your children won't be attending so that we can ensure the wellbeing of all students in the state, to please ensure that they continue with online learning materials that are available on the Education Department's website, and the please ensure that they practice social distancing. Their responsibility for children not going to school will be solely with the parents and carers, of course, and we ask that they adhere to these requests. In addition, of course, if your child is sick or if you are sick, they must not attend school. We also ask that if teachers and in fact the whole entire staff of the Education Department, if they have concerns regarding their own health or that of their families, to please immediately raise these issues with their principal or with their regional office because we will be able to accommodate them either working from home or make arrangements for those staff members. As the Premier said, we are taking the best advice from around the country in relation to maintaining schools to be open. Should that advice change in the near future, we are very much ahead here in Queensland to be able to be very flexible and to be able to close schools and be able to continue the learning of children in their homes or online. The other thing that I really would like to say is that we have increased cleaning in schools, we have taken the best advice from the medical profession around Australia about distancing, about stopping large assemblies and sporting events and those type of activities, so schools are a safe place for your children to be in. We need to have them open for a number of reasons: to continue their learning, to provide the education for those workers that we require in the workplace at the moment, and we ask of course if you choose not to send your children to school, you do that completely freely, but the responsibility for their continuing learning and social distancing then lies with the parent or caretaker. I am happy to answer questions, but Premier, will we go to Dr Young?

PREMIER:

Yes.

DR YOUNG:

Today in Queensland we have 319 confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus, which is 60 more than yesterday. That means its absolutely critical that all of these measures that the Premier has announced, that were determined by first ministers last night, are put in place from midday today. We must, all of us, maintain a 1.5 metre distance from each other and we must minimise the number of interactions that we have with other people in a day. It just makes sense, if you come across 100 people in a day, you have 100 times the chance of getting this novel coronavirus than if you come across one person in a day. So social distancing is physical distancing, but it is also limiting your numbers of interactions. Now, everyone I am sure is aware that for 90 per cent of... 80 per cent of people, this is a mild disease, but for 20 per cent of people it is a very serious disease, and indeed for some of

those, critical and we've already unfortunately seen one death in Queensland. We don't want to see deaths, of course we don't, so that is why this has been put in place, and that is why that 80 per cent who are going to get a really mild disease need to remain in their homes and isolate themselves so they don't pass it on to someone who then passes it on to someone who is vulnerable. That is absolutely critical, we have to look after the 20 per cent of people who, if they get it, will get severe disease. That's really important. Just a few other things; we are continuing normal work in our hospitals. We are decreasing some of the very elective work, so you might see changes to your arrangements for some of the elective surgery that was scheduled for some of the elective outpatients, but the important work that we need to do to save lives in Queensland is continuing. To enable that to continue, please, those of you who are regular blood donors, could you please go and donate blood? The Red Cross has contacted me that they've seen a decrease in the numbers of people coming forward, and I understand that because people are hearing the social distancing message. But Red Cross has that all in hand, they have social distancing in place, so please, if you're well could you please go and donate blood because we need that for our hospitals to continue today to do the work we're doing, and we'll need it going forward. Because unfortunately – although I hope it won't happen – we'll still see accidents on our roads, we'll still see people needing cancer treatment, all of that needs to continue and we need to make sure that all of that normal work of our hospital system continues. Thank you.

MINISTER MILES:

Overnight, Queensland saw an increase of 60 cases, confirmed cases, of COVID-19, that is the highest single day figure we've had so far and justifies, supports the strong action that the Premier and other national leaders have taken overnight to restrict people from accessing large gatherings and events. This is incredibly important because the three tools we have, the three tools we have available to us are, first of all testing, and we are doing more testing in Queensland than just about anywhere in the world. We have done 32,000 tests already. Second, the second tool we have is isolation and quarantine, and that's why everyone we know who is currently contagious is in isolation, and we were contacting everyone that they are in touch... that they have been in touch with, and the third tool we have is social distancing. Put simply, if we can halve the number of people that everyone has contact with, we can halve the number of people of people that can possibly be infected by someone who is contagious, and that is why we need to use all three of those tools. As the Chief Health Officer has outlined, some of our hospitals are beginning the process of rescheduling the least urgent surgeries, and we would ask people to be understanding if they are contacted by our staff, and their appointments or their surgery needs to be rescheduled. Secondly, we are urging people to continue to donate blood, it is incredibly important that we maintain our blood bank supplies and so if you can give blood today or this week, please do so, it is incredibly important. We continue to believe that most of those 319 cases are concentrated in the south east, and continue to be largely sourced either from overseas or direct contact with someone who has been overseas. We are particularly concerned about people returning on cruise ships – four cruise ships have recently arrived in Sydney with thousands of people then spreading throughout the country, many to Queensland, we're in the process of contacting all of them, they are all required to quarantine themselves for 14 days. We know of at least 11 cases from one cruise ship and four from another cruise ship who are now confirmed to be

positive. And so while, at this stage, the infections are largely sourced from overseas, it is incredibly important that we all adhere to those rules as outline by the Premier earlier.

REPORTER:

Premier, [inaudible]?

PREMIER:

Yes we are, Cabinet will be considering that today. I think that is a really important issue. Other states have done it, we've already looking... we've already looked at closing our western border and I think there is a great sense that we should be looking at taking stricter measures, especially with aircraft coming in. We would possibly make people quarantine for 14 days, but let me say very clearly that people should be staying in their state, staying in their suburb and as much as possible, staying at home.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

PREMIER:

We would have to have an exemption for freight, but we are talking about all those issues this morning.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

PREMIER:

Sure, and I will let Dr Young talk about that as well. The council elections and the two by-elections are going ahead. A lot of people have already voted, we have stretched out those pre-polling times and we've extended it. So, it is absolutely important that when you go to cast your vote that you actually keep that social distance. The Electoral Commissioner, I am advised, has sent out that information very clearly to all of the polling booths as well and if everyone follows that practice and procedure, there is no issue. I might get Dr Young to talk about that, and schools.

DR YOUNG:

So the Electoral Commissioner has been working on this for weeks now to increase the number of postal votes, to increase the pre-polling voting process, and there is another week to go with the majority of people having already voted. So I would strongly encourage people in the remaining week, prior to Saturday when the vote is due to finish, that people go and pre-poll vote, and they just maintain that distance, and know who they're going to vote for. They of course, people know who they're going to vote for, so to go into the booth, bring their own pen, go into the booth, make their decision and leave. Don't hand around. Normally our voting process is a very social event, we have sausage sizzles, we have fetes, we have all sorts of things, they're not happening this time, so people just go straight in, vote, and straight out, and the risk of doing that is absolutely minimal. Of course, I would ask that anyone who is sick to not attend, that is just common sense, and anyone who is in quarantine or isolation

or is one of those groups that we're concerned about, for them not to attend, and they should contact the Electoral Commission and manage that process. But for everyone else, absolutely, go and vote, vote early this week, go and vote on Saturday if you haven't been able to vote prior to then and it is perfectly safe.

REPORTER:

I understand Girls Grammar and St Margaret's [inaudible]?

DR YOUNG:

Yes, it is up to every single school. When we do have a positive case in a school, it is often easier just to close for that day so you can work out who the contacts were, where they've been, it just makes things a lot easier. I realise of course it is disruptive for parents, but I know parents understand that. So it just gives a chance for the public health people to get in there, find out what the risks are, find out whose been in contact because every school is different. Every school has got different arrangements, so you can't just have one process, you've got to go in and work out exactly what has happened. It also gives the school a chance – although our schools are kept extremely clean and there are no concerns with that, and as we heard earlier from the minister, that has increased even more – it just gives the school a chance to do yet another clean, to make sure everything is fine. Then, whether or not the school reopens is up to that school. So we've seen some different decisions in the private sector, and I think a lot of that is because of their different population who may attend, their different arrangements in terms of online, there are all sorts of reasons why the private school system might be making different decisions to the public. For the public school system, it is extremely important it remain open. Our children need their education, we all know that education is the most important determinant of health, and determinant of people's situation, so it needs to continue. But just putting that to one side, it's of course true, looking at the evidence, we have not seen outbreaks in schools, we haven't seen them in Australia, we haven't seen them overseas and where children have got it, when we've worked back through how they got it, they got it from their parents. Children are not giving this disease to their parents, their parents are giving it to the children. This is not flu, so I am sure all of you have looked at our flu pandemic plans and understand them and we have a whole range of strategies under that flu pandemic plan, this is not a flu, it is a coronavirus. Totally different, so we need different strategies, and that is why we would see the things that we're doing in this ramp-up are different to what we did in 2009 with swine flu.

REPORTER:

Dr Young, sorry to interrupt you, do you know how many patients are in ICU at the moment?

DR YOUNG:

Yes, we have one patient in ICU at the moment.

REPORTER:

How is their condition?

DR YOUNG:



They're unwell, they're in ICU, they're ventilated.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

DR YOUNG:

I don't have all of those specific details.

REPORTER:

Premier, can I ask you maybe just a personal question. Some of the decisions [inaudible]

PREMIER:

Incredibly tough, but I think we're in unprecedented times here, and there's light at the end of the tunnel. We will get through this if we all work together. But it is incredibly tough, it's heartbreaking, I mean people's lives are being turned upside down. Every day, there are new changes, it's a new world, it's a new reality so we've just got to do everything we can.

REPORTER:

[INAUDIBLE]

PREMIER:

I've got my advice from the Chief Health Officer and all of the states and territories at the National Cabinet took the advice of, as I said that committee that meets without political interference, and then advises us.

REPORTER:

[INAUDIBLE]

PREMIER:

No, New South Wales have said schools are open, and we've said that too. We have said schools are open and parents can make that choice.

REPORTER:

[INAUDIBLE]

PREMIER:

Yes I am Josh, and I have already spoken with the Education Minister and if there are any teachers, or teacher aides or cleaners in that high-risk category they should speak to their principal and they should be having non-contact. So we are making that clear and it is the same message I am giving to everyone else in that high-risk category.

REPORTER:

[INAUDIBLE]

PREMIER:

I might get Dr Young to address that one.

DR YOUNG:

This is advice across the public service or workplaces that if you're in that vulnerable group – so you're over age 60 with one or more chronic diseases, particularly hypertension, diabetes, lung disease or heart disease – then you need to talk to your boss, whoever that may be, about how you minimise that risk. Now there are lots of roles that people can go into, or they can work from home. It is really important that people just consider them.

REPORTER:

[INAUDIBLE]

DR YOUNG:

No pregnant women are not at an increased risk, we've seen that now, we've seen enough cases to know that. So again I reiterate that this is not flu, it's a coronavirus, it's quite different. So with influenza we see that children are at increased risk, particularly children age under five, that's not the case here. We see pregnant women are at risk, that's not the case here. It is very, very clear that people at risk are those who are aged 60 or over with one or more chronic diseases are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders who are 50 years or over are increased risk. But for everyone else they're not, they are most likely to get a mild disease.

[ENDS]



Station: 7 News

Transcript

Program: Press Conference

Interviewee: Minister Steven Miles, Chief Health Officer Dr. Jeanette Young

Date: 26 March 2020

Duration: 19mins 32secs

E&OE

MINISTER STEVEN MILES:

Good morning. Overnight we confirmed a further 50 positive cases of COVID-19 in Queensland which brings our total here in Queensland to 493. They continue to be concentrated amongst those who have recently returned from overseas or people who have had contact with someone who has recently returned from overseas. Tragically we recorded our first death in Queensland from COVID-19 and the second Queenslanders to die from COVID-19 and my condolences go to that family who are currently grieving in Toowoomba the loss of that 69-year-old gentleman. It should serve as a reminder to us all that this virus will kill and that is why we are taking it all so seriously. It could kill somebody you know. They could catch it, they could have caught it from you. And that is why it is so important, so important that absolutely everybody complies with the social distancing measures that we have put in place. They will only work if we all do it together. Whether you're young or old, rich or poor, we need every single Queenslanders to comply with these rules. The spread of the virus from the restaurant at Noosa that we learnt about yesterday underlines just how easily this can spread if we have groups together and especially if we have groups together from different parts of the State, groups travelling to be together. And that's why that limit on gatherings is just so crucial. I'm pleased to report though that here in Queensland we've now tested more than 40,000. Yesterday...as of this morning we had tested 40,946 people and it is that testing...that world best level testing that is allowing us to contain this virus. Right now, we have no Queenslanders in intensive care which is much lower than the levels of hospitalisation and intensive care seen anywhere else in the world and it's precisely because of our high level of testing. I wanted to thank the residents of the Gold Coast and Northern New South Wales. What they are doing in adhering to those border restrictions is helping all of us. Helping all of us to contain the spread between states and so while it might be inconvenient it is incredibly, incredibly important. On schools, of course we welcome the announcement made earlier by the Premier and Minister Grace. It's incredibly important that our health staff in particular continue to be able to send their children to school. Modelling by our hospitals suggested if they had been unable to do that it would have potentially impacted on 30 per cent of our health workforce. We are already working on the basis that a proportion of our health workforce will get sick and that we will need to cover them. We can't also cover those that don't have alternative arrangements for their children's learning. So it's incredibly welcomed by our hospitals and our health staff that they'll be able to continue to access schools. Of course, we also have advice to parents who might be considering asking

grandparents to take care of those school children who now won't be going to school and we'd ask them to be cautious in making those decisions. Take into account the age of those grandparents and whether they have any co-morbidities. It's incredibly important that people take their advice from our Chief Health Officer. Take their advice from the Premier. Take their advice from us and not from Facebook. There is so much misinformation out there and I understand that it can be complicated particularly as these rules are changing day to day, as the situation changes day to day so it's incredibly important that people get their information from credible sources like our Chief Health Officer who is a fantastic job. Dr Jeanette Young.

DR. JEANETTE YOUNG:

Good morning. My first very, very strong piece of advice for every single Queenslander is if you are sick, stay home. It doesn't matter what the cause of that illness is, stay home. Then if you're in one of those categories that means that you could have COVID-19, seek advice and get assessed and then tested if you meet the criteria. That's really important. We are still seeing people go to work for three or four days unwell then think "this might be COVID-19" and get tested and yes it is. And then we have to do an enormous amount of contact tracing. We have to require a large number of people to go into quarantine. So if we could just stop that one problem. If every single Queenslander, all five million of us, if we get unwell just stay home. It's the best advice anytime and now it's more important than ever. I understand that people have jobs that they need to do. I understand that some people won't get paid and I realise how difficult that is but that is my absolute imperative that I'm asking of every Queenslander. If you are sick, stay home.

REPORTER:

That's about as forceful as I've heard you over the years. Are you getting impatient or frustrated by what's happened?

DR. YOUNG:

No, I'm not getting impatient. In fact, I think we have done the most brilliant job in Queensland which I would expect. We had 50 new cases today. We're holding our own, we really and truly are. We're not seeing that exponential rise in cases which is excellent. I'm just saying that that is the best way of combating it and today, we can manage those case. We can manage those numbers. I'm looking forward as we always do in Queensland. We always look at the next stage. We don't sit in the present, we look to the future and we prepare ourselves. I'm looking to the future when we're going to have more cases because we will unfortunately, and the message will then be exactly the same so I'm getting everyone prepared now. Now's the time to start that process – if you're sick just stay home.

REPORTER:

Are you happy with the school arrangements?

DR. YOUNG:

I'm very happy with the school arrangements. I think that's an excellent process because I think it is really important that schools remain open for our essential workers children because then society won't be able to continue. We won't be able to do the things we need to

do to maintain our society. And our health system won't be able to do the things it needs to do. Because remember, there's two parts to our health system. There's the COVID-19 response which we're well and truly prepared for, that we have system in place, responses in place. But there's also the normal part of our health system. It has to keep going as well. We've still go to deliver babies. We've still go to do elective surgery. We've still go to do that emergency work so we've got both that need to continue. And if we lose our workforce because they're unwell because they're part of the community. I have no concerns about our health workforce getting infected at work. I'm concerned they'll get infected in the community and at home. So if we lose our workforce due to that and we lose our workforce because their children can't go to school then we will not be able to provide the health services needed. But having said that, we also need our teachers to be protected. They're a very important group as is every single person in Queensland. So, by reducing the numbers of children at school we can then make sure that our older, more vulnerable teachers aren't in front of classrooms and we can also increase the amount of social distancing within our schools so it's the perfect solution.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

DR. YOUNG:

Yep, they've come forward to us offering that they have equipment that may be of use so of course we're looking at that. We're looking at every single process, everything that might assist us. There's every chance we won't need it. But I believe, and that is the philosophy in our state, that we are always prepared for everything. So, we are looking at a whole range of ways that we can up capacity, up the numbers of ventilators, the equipment that's available. I'm very, very comfortable that the arrangements we have in Queensland and in Australia for that essential equipment is excellent. That we have it there, but I don't think there is every anything wrong with looking further and just seeing what else is out there. And it's amazing what is there across our state that we could use.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible] in ICU [inaudible]?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

We have no one in ICU today.

REPORTER:

Okay. And can you explain something? I think there is a bit of confusion about the messaging with telling people to stay at home and stay indoors and don't go out, and then saying it's okay for 5.3 million Queenslanders to go to the polling booths on Saturday?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

That's very, very easy to explain. So, there is no risk going to vote on Saturday. Our Electoral Commissioner has been regularly on the phone to me. We've worked through every strategy that can be put in place, and he has done all of that and more. We know, due to our fantastic

pre-polling arrangements and the way Queenslanders have responded and with the postal vote process, with all of that the number of Queenslanders left to vote by Saturday will be relatively small. In fact, I'm more concerned with people going to Dan Murphy's. The scenes that I've seen there have been appalling. The risks of actually going to a shop – to Coles or Woolworths or Dan Murphy's – is far, far higher than the risk of going and voting on Saturday. So when people go and vote on Saturday, I want them to have already thought in their own mind who they're going to vote for. Sometimes people will go into a booth – I've seen it my self, you will all have seen it – and they're not quite sure and they're making up their mind. Well, make up your mind before you get there. Take your voting card so you can be checked off quickly, take your own pen, walk into the booth, mark off who you are voting for and walk out. Don't stop and have a chat with the person in the booth next to you. These are normally really great social engagements – I've always loved them. You know, going in and having the sausage sizzle, catching up with some friends – you make a real thing of it. This is not the time to do this. This is the time to go in, vote and leave. And if people do that there is no risk at all.

REPORTER:

What sort of measures are going to be in place [inaudible] all that social business going on. I'm talking about inside the polling places [inaudible], for example. [Inaudible] We've seen photos at pre-polling booths and the lines go for hundreds of metres and there's no social distancing happening there. So who's going to be enforcing that. Are you going to have ECQ staff out there making sure everyone's staying a metre and a half away? Or...

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

There has been plenty of staff there and they'll continue to manage it. Look, it's simple, straightforward advice. If you turn up and there is a long queue, why would you stand in a queue? I'm not good at standing in queues. Why wouldn't you go away and come back, because it's no different to anything else – that you just look at what's there. We have 1200 places you can vote across Queensland. There is a multitude of places, so go and... Look, most people know which are the ones that have more people attending, which less. Just use a bit of common sense and work out how you can go and maintain that distance. So, this is a request to every Queenslanders who hasn't voted and is due to vote – try and vote in prepoll or vote on Saturday, and just you be responsible for maintaining 1.5 metres. You all know what that distance is, and you can do it.

REPORTER:

Out of the confirmed cases in Queensland, do you know how many people have actually recovered?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Yes we do, and that information is there. The issue is it actually takes quite a while to fully recover. So, although it is a mild disease, you'll have some ongoing symptoms. And we are being absolutely ultra-cautious here, because we don't want someone who feels like they've recovered and feels well to go out in the community and continue to spread the virus. So, we are being very, very cautious. And you would imagine, we've had a curve so most of our

cases are more recently diagnosed, so they're still in the early part of that disease. But we are not concerned about them, it's more about who we've got in ICU, which we don't have anyone today. They are the ones that we'd be concerned about for the vast majority of people. And because we are doing so much testing here in Queensland, we are picking up all the really mild cases, which means I usually use the figure that 80 percent of cases are mild. I think for Queensland, because we are doing so much testing, at this point in the pandemic for Queensland, many, many more are mild.

REPORTER:

Just on personal protective equipment for doctors, nurses, and medical staff, do we still have enough of that?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Yes, we have sufficient personal protective equipment to make sure that all our health staff in our public health system have what they need to do their job. We don't have enough to waste it, so the Hospital and Health Services have been brilliant in looking at how they use personal protective equipment and making sure it is being utilised appropriately – that people don't open a pack and then not need it and throw it out, that only one person sees a patient when you need to use personal protective equipment. You don't have three people seeing that patient. So really, really sensible things. And if we do that and we treat it as the precious resource that it is for this pandemic, then we have sufficient personal protective equipment for our health staff.

REPORTER:

Just on [inaudible] after advice from the government about whether Parliament will go ahead next week?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

That decision has already been made.

REPORTER:

Can you tell us?

MEDIA ADVISOR:

I don't believe it's been announced actually.

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Oh, I apologise. That's not for me to comment on.

REPORTER:

So, you are not telling us?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

No. That is not for me to comment on.



REPORTER:

[Inaudible] that should say we'll go ahead in some managed format?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Any gathering is safe to go ahead if it meets the requirements for social distancing and the numbers and all of those requirements. Of course, it is safe. And that anyone who is sick does not attend – and that is ill with any symptom. I think they are the principles for any gathering. You would have seen, of course, the announcements from the Prime Minister about sizes of gatherings, because there are two things that people should think about when they go into a gathering. The first is the 1.5 metre distance, which I think we're adhering to in this room. And the second is wherever possible to minimise the number of people you come into contact with. So, if this one person you come into contact with 100 people in one day, you are going to have 100 times the chance of getting infected than someone who only comes in contact with one person in a day. And that's just sheer numbers.

REPORTER:

Just on elective surgery, what do you say to those people who won't be able to get the surgery done, and [inaudible].

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

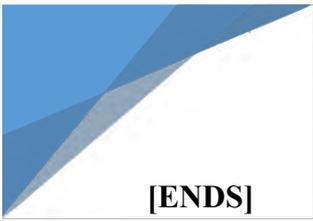
Yeah. Yes, of course it's difficult for those people who are asking to delay their elective surgery. So those are Category 3 patients and less urgent patients. But to them, I can understand that any elective surgery is really, really important. We're having to make choices, as we're all having to make as this unrolls. And one of the choices that we've made in Health, is that we are going to do all of the Category 1 surgical cases as soon as possible, because they are critical cases, and the more urgent of the Category 2. So, we are going to keep all our surgeons and our theatres, and we're working very closely with the private sector. We're going to keep them all going, but we are going to focus on that group because when we get the large numbers, as unfortunately we are going to see, then we are not going to be able to do elective surgery, and so we want to make sure that all of those urgent ones have been done prior to when we have to really decrease elective surgery.

REPORTER:

Is it at all possible to say how many cases we may end up with? Are we talking hundreds, are we talking thousands?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Well it depends actually on every Queenslanders. So, if every Queenslanders does those things we've asked them to do – and it's a lot, I know – if every Queenslanders stays home when they're unwell, absolutely quarantines themselves or isolates themselves if they're required to, and we manage our borders so that we stop people from other places that have got more cases coming Queensland, unless they go into quarantine. If we do all of those things, then we are going to see a lot fewer cases. There is no doubt in my mind. If we don't do those things we are going to see more cases. Thank you.



Released under RTI - DPC

Engagement: Press conference

Topic: Coronavirus update

Speaker/s: Health Minister Steven Miles and Chief Health Officer Dr Jeannette Young

Airdate: 28 March 2020

Duration: 16 minutes 3 seconds

E&OE

MINISTER MILES:

I can confirm that there are 70 further positive cases here in Queensland, bringing our total number to 625. Three of those are currently in intensive care. We have now tested 45,000 people, more than 45,000 people. Of our cases, 87 came off cruise ships, and 61 from one cruise ship alone, the Ruby Princess. We now have 27 cases that can be traced back to the Sails restaurant at Noosa. Of all of our cases though, just 66, roughly 10 per cent, are currently in hospital, and what that says is that our plan to treat people at home is a good one. We will be able to, for most people, take care of them at home while they are isolated at home, and that's why today we're announcing a massive expansion in our telehealth capability. We will go from 90 to 1600 concurrent appointments in our telehealth system, and that will allow us to treat COVID-19 patients at home if they need it, to treat aged care residents in their facilities so that they don't need to be exposed to the risks outside of the home. More of our patients will get more of their specialist outpatients' appointments from home or from their GP's clinic, avoiding exposing them to the risks of coming to hospital. As of midnight tonight, people returning from overseas will be forcibly quarantined in hotels, securely quarantined in hotels, to avoid the risk of them infecting family members and other members of the community. Yesterday 1047 people arrived in Brisbane at Brisbane airport on international flights. That gives you some idea of the number of people that we will be accommodating in those hotels, but we would expect that number to continue to decrease. Just over a week ago that number was 7000 a day so they're already starting to go down. We will expect that to continue, and certainly that our hotel sector is well-equipped to cope with those kinds of numbers. And finally, we've been saying for some time now that voting today on election day is important. Many, many people have already voted. Voting at your local polling booth is very safe. Don't forget to bring your own pens, sanitise your hands on the way in. The ECQ staff are doing a great job of getting people in and out in about three minutes, and my next job for today is to go and vote at my local primary school.

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Thank you, Minister. Well as you heard we've had an increase in cases, but that's been fairly steady, and that's due to all the fantastic work done by Queenslanders. It's really important that any Queenslanders who is asked to go into quarantine if they're well, or to go into isolation if they're sick and then if they're a confirmed case, follows that. And that means

staying inside, not having visitors and minimising contact with other people in that household. If you're in isolation, that means exactly that. You do not come into contact with any one else in your household because there is a high risk you will transmit the virus to them. So, as you've heard, at midnight tonight, anyone coming through our international border will be quarantined in a hotel. So there they'll be managed so that they can't come into contact with other people. And that's because we're still getting large numbers of cases coming through the border, and as people are coming from areas in the world where there are even more cases happening, such as the United States and Europe, we know that our passengers, our people, coming back are even more likely to be infected. So it's vital that they go into quarantine and that they're assisted so that there is no need for them to leave that hotel room for the fourteen days unless of course they need healthcare. We currently have a number of Australians returning from overseas, particularly Australians who are stranded on cruise ships overseas, and I'm sure you've all seen that and I'm glad they've been able to come home. Now, the Chief Health Officer in New South Wales and myself have had a discussion this morning that we believe these are such high risk situations that those people returning from cruise ships overseas need to go into hotel quarantine immediately when they arrive in the country. So we're working that through. It's ahead of that midnight deadline tonight, but we really believe that cruise ships are a very high risk. We've already had 87 Queenslanders develop the infection from three cruise ships, so we know they're a high risk, so we're going to be pre-emptive here to ensure that we protect people in the community. Thank you.

REPORTER:

Could we just ask you a couple of questions? The elections obviously going ahead today. We've had crews out and about this morning. The length of lines varies. It's certainly not going to take a few minutes everywhere. Are you adamant that that was the right decision to go ahead with the local government elections today?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

It will only take a few minutes once someone gets into the voting centre. So I know there are queues outside, but it's very easy to maintain a 1.5 metre distance outside. We're doing it here. I had a good look here, everyone here is maintaining a 1.5 metre distance. That is the same for people who are going to queue up to go into the voting centres. So I have no concerns about that, and yes, it is safe for people to attend these voting centres, to go in, they've got to go in and be quick about it. And the Electoral Commission has done everything to assist. So have your pen with you ready to use, have your voting card with you so you can be immediately ticked off and it doesn't take a while for the electoral staff to find your name on the roll. Have made up your mind before you go into the booth. Go into the booth, tick off who you wish to vote for, pop the slip into the box and leave, and that takes three minutes. There's no risk here. We've got to remember, the risk of people going to the shops is far, far higher than that, so if I could please encourage people to use similar strategies when they go to the shops. I think we need to go back to the old days, although maybe people use their smart phones to do it, to write a list of what you want when you go to the shops. To think which part of the shop are they in. Go in, buy what you need to, don't go looking around for other things. Go in, buy what you need to and immediately leave, and

make sure that when you queue up to pay you maintain that 1.5 metre distance at those queues at the checkout. That's really, really important.

REPORTER:

Do you understand though why some people may have been uncertain this morning after [inaudible] sitting right next to each other?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Of course people are going to be uncertain. This is a time that is really, really difficult for everyone. The messages are actually very clear. The message is, if you're sick with anything at this point in time, stay home, and you will protect your family, your friends and all Queenslanders. That's really important. We know that, although there is some limited evidence, very small amount of evidence that there might be some transmission prior to someone having symptoms, it's rare and also it really and truly... it is not a problem. So therefore, if people, as soon as they feel unwell with any symptom, stay home and seek advice about what they should do – they can ring 13 Health, they can ring their own GP – then everyone is protected. That's the really important thing. And that's why quarantine is so important and so effective, and we've seen it in Queensland, that the vast majority of our cases are people who have come through the border that we suspected would develop the infection and indeed they have. And that's why we're increasing that so that they don't infect their families, so we're now requiring people to quarantine in a hotel, away from their family and away from the community.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] after the voting, say you expecting to see quite a large surge in people?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

No, absolutely not. As I've said, the risks of attending the vote today, as long as people follow those instructions, that they stay home if they're unwell and they maintain 1.5 metre distance, that they take their own pen, take a card so they can marked off quickly, go into the booth, mark off who they want to vote for, put the slip of paper into the box and leave. If people do that the risk is minimal.

REPORTER:

Just one last question on the elections. Do you expect many people to not go out and vote? Will there be any leniency?

MINISTER MILES:

Look, voting is still compulsory in Queensland, but there are always considerations of the circumstances people are in. And so, obviously, people who take the Chief Health Officer's advice and don't attend because they're sick will have the opportunity to explain that as their reason, but I'd encourage everyone who is not sick and has not yet voted to grab their pen, take it down to their polling booth and vote today.

REPORTER:

Which hotels in the south east will be used for quarantine?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

We're currently working that through with the hotels and with the Commonwealth, as the Commonwealth is funding this so we're just sorting it all out. So we'll have those hotels ready for midnight tonight.

REPORTER:

Right. So there are no rooms ready right now?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Yes there are, but we're just finalising the arrangements and as soon as we've got those arrangements and we've sorted out with the Commonwealth, because it's actually the Australian Border Force who are putting this into place, so as soon as all that's done, that will be announced.

REPORTER:

Roughly how many hotels will be needed?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

The number we need. We've had lots and lots of hotels coming to us so we'll be able to use as many hotels as we need. But as you've heard from the Minister, the numbers of people entering Australia have decreased substantially, and yesterday in Queensland there was just over 1000, and that's been steadily decreasing – the day before there were 2000, a week ago there were 7000. So there might be a surge we're thinking of Australians recognising if they don't come home soon, they won't be able to come home as has been seen with a lot of those people who were caught up on cruise ships around the world.

REPORTER:

How many do you expect to be home tonight, around 1000?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

I expect it will be possibly less, but there might be a surge. It's really whether people can actually find flights to get onto to fly home on. So we're seeing people try to grab whatever flights they can. Now people will be quarantined into the city that they land, they won't be onforwarded to their home destination. So if people fly into Sydney, that's where they'll be spending their 14 days. If they fly into Brisbane and normally would fly on say to the Northern Territory, they'd be staying here in Brisbane for the fourteen days.

REPORTER:

Okay, so no names or specific numbers of hotels at this point?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

No, we have all that planning, but we need to share it when that's been signed off by all the parties involved in this planning.

REPORTER:

Do we have any more specific details about exactly where these clusters of cases are rather than just Metro North or Metro South, are there more specific suburbs?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Yes, so we've released that information for which hospital and health service has got cases. So that's available, you can look at that on the website.

REPORTER:

So there's nothing more specific than that, specific suburbs?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Sometimes. It's about privacy of numbers. So there's information out there. You've got to remember that these cases when they're confirmed are confined to their home, and that is, as I said before, is really, really important that people who are a confirmed case or are waiting for the result of a test have to be isolated in their home if they're reasonably well. If they're unwell, then they get admitted to hospital, and we're seeing about 10 per cent of people being admitted to hospital at the moment.

REPORTER:

I've got one more question for the Minister, if that's okay? Yesterday we heard of an instance where people in outback towns, they've seen a surge in caravanners following the borders being shut. Are you supportive of calls to lockdown those outback towns to protect those locals out there?

MINISTER MILES:

Already a number of Queensland's remote communities are lockdown, only allowing people to come and go for essential reasons. At this stage people can still move around the rest of the state, although further consideration will be given to those restrictions over time. But we've already effectively said, don't go about anything that is non-essential. And so, it's already effectively the case that just driving around the outback would be considered non-essential, and people shouldn't be doing it. I understand most caravan parks and camping ground are closed to visitors, and anyone who arrived after that midnight Wednesday deadline is required to quarantine for fourteen days. That is a legally enforceable order to quarantine, and if people don't they're breaking the law.

REPORTER:

And do you have anything to say about doctors facing mask shortages?

MINISTER MILES:

At this time, we are very confident in our supply chains and our stockpiles for protective equipment. Our doctors and nurses and health staff are the heroes, are the heroes of COVID-19 and we will always make sure that they have what they need to do their job, taking care of Queenslanders. Right now there is a significant stockpile at the distribution centre of all of that equipment, and our doctors and nurses and health professionals should be assured that

they will have access to sufficient numbers. However, what we have said is that they are valuable. There is a global shortage of this equipment, and so we have encouraged them to treat them as a valuable resource, and we would say the same thing to doctors in the community, to dentists, private hospitals – everyone else who uses this same protective equipment. There is global shortage, we are getting as much of it as we can, we have sufficient stocks, but it is valuable.

[ENDS]

Released under RTI - DPC

Format: Press conference

Speaker/s: Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk; Minister Cameron Dick; State Disaster Coordinator Steve Gollschewski; Dr Jeanette Young

Airdate: 29 March 2020

Duration: 32 minutes

E&OE

PREMIER:

First of all, I want to report that tragically a 75-year-old woman passed away overnight at Caboolture Hospital. She was a passenger from the Ruby Princess, and once again I extend my condolences to the family members of her, and as I said the other day, we know that we are going to continue to see these incidents that are happening, and I think everyone needs to realise that this person has a family and friends and loved ones, and it is indeed a tragedy. So my heartfelt condolences. Last night we had a report of 31 new cases overnight, bringing our total in Queensland now to 656. That is a lower number of new cases compared to the past, but once again it is no need for people to relax any of their social distancing. We are not out of the woods yet, we need to keep going and we need to make sure that we are following every message that people are giving in relation to this. Before handing over to Dr Young and Minister Miles, Minister Dick and I would like to talk to you about some of the planning that we are doing behind the scenes. Now, we're standing here at the RNA. Over 100 years ago, this was used for assistance with the Spanish Flu, we are hoping that we don't ever have to come to this situation, but it would be negligent of us not to do all the planning that is necessary. Now what that means is we're doubling our capacity in our emergency, we're making sure we've got extra bed space in our hospitals. During the course of next week, Minister Miles and Dr Young will be visiting some of our regional hospitals, but what we know is we need to make sure that we have extra hotel facilities and we actually have extra spaces if required. Like I said, this is worst case scenario planning, but if everyone is doing the right thing at home – and can I thank everybody for doing the right thing, everywhere I have seen over the last few days, people are absolutely practicing their social distancing and I know that they are giving the messages at home to the family members to keep washing their hands and to keep that 1.5 metres. And also too, making sure that there are no parties happening at home, and our State Disaster Coordinator will talk a little bit more about that. So we're looking at the RNA as an example of to cater for any overflow if needed, but also too, on the other side of the river we are looking at the Brisbane Convention Centre, and of course the Brisbane Convention Centre will also have direct access to the PA Hospital as well. So really good planning that's happening, and like I said we hope that we don't have to get to that stage. Just in relation to passengers that have been coming in with our new quarantine measures that were put in place from midnight last night, and the State Disaster Coordinator will address this in more detail, but 86 passengers came in and everybody has abiding with the new strict quarantine to make sure that people are actually going into those hotels. Also too, the State Disaster Coordinator will talk about the number of notices that

have been given from people coming in domestically, and also across the border to make sure that they are going into self-quarantine as well. But let me say this very clearly to everyone: stay in your state, stay in your suburb, now is not the time to travel. I'll be speaking with mayors next week as well, I think it is absolutely imperative that we get the message out to Queenslanders, stay in your state, stay in your region, stay in your suburb. I don't want to see a mass progression of people, a mass movement of people, coming down from the north into the south east. And likewise, I don't want to see mass movement of people in the south east travelling to see family and friends. There is no Easter holidays this year, guys, I am really serious about this. We need to make sure that everyone is staying safe and as much as possible staying at home, except to go of course to those essential services. I am going to hand over to Minister Dick, he will say a few more words about the planning that is being done here for the RNA, and I want to thank the RNA – and Brendan is here as well and he might say a few words – and then we'll hand over to the State Disaster Coordinator and then Dr Young and Minister Miles. So I'll hand over to Cameron next.

MINISTER DICK:

Thanks very much, Premier. I'd like to give an update on the work the Department of State Development and Manufacturing is doing to support Queensland Health in the scenario planning work its doing for COVID-19. I am here to assure the people of Queensland that our government, through my department, is doing everything it can, working night and day alongside Queensland Health to ensure our frontline health workers, in particular, have the personal protective equipment they need. As the Director-General Dr John Wakefield and the Chief Health Officer Dr Young have advised Queensland, Queensland Health is well-stocked with the personal protective equipment that they need at this time. But we are not resting, we are working flat-out with Queensland companies to ensure we can stand up local manufacturing capacity and capability to ensure we have backup. Over many years we have seen the manufacture of protective equipment moved to other countries down long supply chains. We all now know, we can never let that happen again, we need to make more stuff in Queensland. So, we need local manufacturing capability and capacity and that's exactly what our government is working on with industry. We need local manufacturing capacity to ensure we can deal with these sorts of health crises in the future. We are working with local manufacturers on manufacturing hospital and medical grade quality facemasks, face shields, gowns, hand sanitiser, disinfectant and other critical medical PPE. Now this is very challenging, not just for our state, but for our nation. But in 10 days my department and the government and industry have made very good progress. We have started with the production of hand sanitiser in Queensland, we are not turning water into wine, but we are turning rum into hand sanitiser and I want to thank those companies that are assisting with us in that important work. We will have more to say about more products going forward. Queensland Health is doing the scenario planning for the stand-up of additional space that may be required to support the response to the pandemic, and our department is working very closely and supporting Queensland Health as it develops those scenario options, in particular we are focused on what is the equipment and supplies our frontline health workers need going forward. So, we want to make sure Queensland Health is well prepared and well supported for the coming challenge. But none of that will matter if Queenslanders don't do their job as well. So, to all Queenslanders: wash your hands, stay away from each other, stay apart, keep your distance and ensure that you do everything you can by staying at home, by doing all of

those other measures, do everything you can to protect yourself, your family and very importantly, frontline health workers in our state.

STEVE GOLLSCHEWSKI:

Good morning everyone, thank you Premier. Could I just start with just reinforcing the words that you've already heard, and thanks to the community for the compliance that we are seeing across all of our community. Obviously, there is an enormous amount of activity going on in terms of both police and all government agencies to ensure that we bring our Chief Health Officer's directives to life and that people take note of what we're trying to achieve here. I should start with saying that whilst we and the police will show compassion and understanding when we deal with the community, we will not be being very tolerant of anyone that wilfully does not comply with the directions of the Chief Health Officers. And as of yesterday, police have the ability to issue penalty infringement notices, and they will be issuing them when they are appropriate, and we believe that needs to be done to ensure that people comply with the Chief Health Officer's directions – and I'll come back to that. Can I also assure that in my role as State Disaster Coordinator that all parts of the Queensland Government are working together seamlessly, that despite incredible challenge of pulling together border closures, international quarantining of passengers that are returning to Australia, the quarantining of domestic passengers, protecting our indigenous communities and ensure compliance across the community, as well as making sure that we resupply our state, continue supply chains and make sure that our business gets on, that we are working very well and everything is going as well as I could possibly hope. If I can come back to what is happening in terms of our borders. Since its instigation on the 26th of March, we've seen at the road borders, 13,483 vehicles intercepted. 833 people have been given a direction to quarantine, 8333 have been considered exempt after being stopped. We exempted 336 on compassionate grounds and 946 have been given interim travelling arrangements because they had exemptions, and just under 100 vehicles have been turned around. At our domestic airport, we've seen 3890 passengers processed, 1328 of them being given quarantine notices. We are checking compliance with these notices, and people should understand that, there is on going contact, that it is not simply a matter of taking your notice, going home, and then thinking you can do whatever you want, we will be following up on that to ensure that people observe the instructions within those notices. As the Premier mentioned, as of last night, midnight we implemented an international quarantine process for those people returning into Australia in Queensland. The first flights have arrived this morning, and as the Premier said, 80-odd... 86 people on that plane, 77 have been given quarantine notices and they are currently being housed in hotels in Brisbane, being supported by Queensland Government through the Queensland Police Service and other agencies. But also I should point out that great cooperation with our commonwealth colleagues in the Australian Border Force, Australian Federal Police in particular, and the Australian Defence Force, so thank you to them. That will continue for the duration of the Chief Health Officer's directives in that space, so we are planning for a long-term response in that space. Overall, as the Premier mentioned, the social distancing compliance has been quite good. We are still seeing people, however, that think it is okay to go home and bring some friends over and have a party and have a few drinks and not worry about the social distancing. You need to understand, and I am sure the Chief Health Officer will address this, that the directives are very clear about some of these things and we, as the police, will be looking to ensure that we enforce that. I

just want to finally say, and remind everyone that we also have an operation to ensure that our indigenous communities are protected, and that is in place. So, anyone thinking of travelling into those areas must really understand what is happening in those areas because they will not be given access unless they are specifically exempt to travel into those areas. Thank you.

MINISTER MILES:

Of the roughly 650 COVID-19 patients in Queensland right now, just 57 are being treated in hospital, just three in intensive care, showing how well our hospitals are supporting people with mild illness to recover at home. Queenslanders should be very confident that our health system is the best in the world, and it is very well prepared for all of the possible scenarios of this outbreak. We have plans in place to deal with mild, moderate or high outbreaks in our existing built capacity – our public and private hospitals – as well as that hospital in the home system. However, if we experience a severe or extreme outbreak, then we have contingency plans in place to use alternative spaces like this one. Of course, we hope it never comes to that, but it should give people confidence that we have plans in place for every single possible scenario. If we all do what we are asked to do though, it will never come to that. And it is heartening to see the measures working already. The rate of growth last week was half that of the week before. We are flattening the curve, largely by social distancing as well as a reduction in the number of people returning from overseas, returning from countries with high outbreaks. We expect roughly 350 people to arrive today, that's down from 7000 a day a couple of weeks ago. And of course, all of those 350 will now go into enforced quarantine so they don't infect family members and other members of their households. I think for many of us though, this won't really hit home until somebody in our community dies, and certainly the death overnight of somebody at Caboolture Hospital has hit home for me, I now know that there is a family in my community, near to my family grieving the loss of a loved one, and that is what is at stake here, that is why it is so important that we all take the advice that our Chief Health Officer, Dr Jeanette Young, is providing. One element of that advice goes to having visitors in your home. You know, it's a beautiful day out there and there is nothing more Australian on a beautiful day like today, than to have your neighbours over for a barbeque, and certainly that was my plan this afternoon. My neighbours had bought ribs, they'd got some beer from a local craft brewery and we were going to have a small barbeque, well we've cancelled that because it would've been more than 10 people in a private residence and the Chief Health Officer is urging people not to have functions like that. I'd like to ask her now to provide her daily update.

DR YOUNG:

So as you've heard, we had 31 new cases confirmed overnight. And, although that is less than we've seen, we really want to be very, very tight and decrease those cases as much as we can. And that's why we have in place that directive that no one can have more than 10 people in their own home, unless there are ordinarily more than that number who live in that house, we do of course have some situations in Queensland where there are larger numbers of people living together, so it doesn't apply there. Although I would ask that those people not invite any additional people into their home. For people who have less than 10 people living in their home ordinarily, they really need to minimise the number of people they invite over, and they

should consider that. But the maximum number that can be present in an individual's home is 10. And that is to just decrease the amount of contact that people have with other people, because as I've always said, it is important to maintain a 1.5 metre distance with everyone. But it is also important to decrease the number of people you have contact with. If you have contact with 100 people in a day, going out about, shopping, going to other places, having people in your home, you will have 100 times the risk than if you only have contact with one person. So everyone needs to use different ways to keep in contact with other people: picking up the phone, using facetime or Skype, whatever way so that you maintain that contact, that is really important. Then we've also brought in that process as of midnight last night, which has been working very, very well, that anyone coming in through the international border needs to go into quarantine in a facility. So at this point in time, we have those international travellers in two hotels at the airport, so at the Novotel and the Ibis, and once those hotels are full we have additional hotels that we'll be using. But we're also seeing that the numbers of people coming through our international border are rapidly declining. As well as that, the police, as you've heard, are maintaining processes at our domestic borders, so at our land borders and at our airports, and working with anyone who comes through those processes, that unless they've got some clear exemption then they need to also go into 14 days quarantine. And this is all about keeping people in Queensland safe, because we know at this point in time, although we've not got any significant transmission locally of COVID-19, we do know that it's occurring in Sydney, and to a lesser extent, in Melbourne, and that is why we want to keep our domestic borders secure. Thank you.

REPORTER:

Dr Young, just on the 10 in the homes, is it 10 or more and do you have the powers to break that up? What powers do you have?

DR YOUNG:

I do have powers for exemptions, but I don't believe that there would be situations that they'd apply. So people can apply to me for exemptions, because there are always going to be certain things that we didn't think of when we wrote those orders, but I really think that people should not only make sure they don't have more than 10 people in their home, but they should really think will they have that gathering? Because as I said before the best thing is just to minimise interaction with other people.

REPORTER:

Dr Young, do you have figures on how many people have so far recovered from the virus in Queensland? I understand [inaudible]?

DR YOUNG:

Yes, we are working through that data at the moment with our hospital and health services, so they've been focussed, of course, on finding cases. We know there has been a lot of people who've recovered, of course they have because 80 per cent and more of the cases in Queensland have been relatively mild, so we'll be working through in the next few days that data.

REPORTER:

Just on this poor woman who has passed away, can you explain anymore where... had she been in contact with any of the others that have passed away, and do we know if any of her relatives [inaudible]?

DR YOUNG:

So she was on the Ruby Princess, and we know that across Australia there've been large numbers of cases that came out of that cruise ship. Unfortunately, other members of her family are unwell and in quarantine, or in isolation. We also know that she has got, well she did have significant comorbidities.

REPORTER:

And just on the three others who are intensive care, are they in the south east corner?

DR YOUNG:

Yes, we've got... may I check my notes just to confirm that? So, we have two in metro north and one in metro south, so two in the northside of Brisbane and one in the southside of Brisbane.

REPORTER:

Earlier this week Minister Miles had said that there wouldn't be any need for field hospitals based on the modelling of the reproduction rate of the virus, has that modelling changed, or is this simply just the very, very worst case scenario that at the moment you can't foresee happening but you need to have these measures in place just in case?

DR YOUNG:

I think you've just answered the question. Yes, so this is just part of our planning, in Queensland we always prepare for the absolute worst scenario. We very, very rarely need it, but if you plan and that means you'll have all of the requirements, everything sorted ahead of time just in case its needed. So we don't believe – because we have significant built capacity already in Queensland – we don't believe that we'll need this but we just think its important to have it in place and plan for it in case.

REPORTER:

Dr Young, in other parts of the country there's been some concern about the impact of elective surgery cancellations and staff being stood down and closures and the like, is there any concern here in Queensland and how are private hospitals [inaudible]?

DR YOUNG:

Yes so we know that private hospitals have cancelled some of their elective surgery and as a result they've stood down some staff. So I am currently working with the private hospitals to see how we can use that capacity, because that's another reason why we don't believe we need a facility like this, because we do have access to all of that built capacity in the private sector, so we're working through all of that at the moment. Within Queensland Health, we're doing all of the elective surgery that we possibly can and using all our capacity to do it.

We've just moved our focus away from the less urgent Category Three work to really concentrate on clearing all of the Category One and the more serious Category Two work.

REPORTER:

How many people could you feasibly fit in here, if this hall at showgrounds were put together, and how long would it take to pull together?

DR YOUNG:

That's why we're doing the planning. So we will work through how we would use this facility, what work needs to be done to make it appropriate for that use, what we might use it for, all of that's part of the planning that we've started.

REPORTER:

And I understand it wouldn't just be this facility and at Southbank, but also some facilities around the state as well?

DR YOUNG:

That's the work that we'll be doing. Now that we have all of that work happening with the private sector, its less likely that we'll need that additional capacity because we now have a lot of extra capacity. But we'll continue to work through and continue to plan.

REPORTER:

How big is this planning effort?

PREMIER:

Its mammoth. It's the likes of which we've never seen before. But I think what gives me great comfort is the fact that I have a great department that is absolutely focused, I've got Minister Cameron Dick from State Development also helping with the planning, and I've got other Ministers that are doing other jobs as well because it is such a huge job. So I just want to reassure Queenslanders that we are absolutely focused on making sure that we have all of our planning done, and all of our scenario testing, but as I said, everybody can do their bit by making sure that they are social distancing and we can flatten that curve together. And it is comforting to see that people are responding to that, so thank you Queensland.

REPORTER:

Just on yesterday's handling of the votes, what's your make of the ECQ's handling, not being able to count the figures?

PREMIER:

Well I am pretty disappointed, frankly. I mean they've got one job and their job is to make sure that they can actually run an election, so I'll be ordering of that as to why it happened.

REPORTER:

What's your understanding of what happened overnight?

PREMIER:

I understand there was technical issues with the computer system. I'll get a full briefing from the Attorney tomorrow, but there'll be a full review into it.

REPORTER:

How frustrating was it, given a lot of Queenslanders have been encouraged to vote, a lot of them [inaudible]?

PREMIER:

Of course its frustrating, but what we will see, come next week is we will have mayors in place. And for me, that is my number one issue, I need to be able to be talking to these mayors, talking about regional needs, making sure that they are communicating with the public and we haven't had that for a month.

REPORTER:

Are you concerned, Premier, about the delay [inaudible] some of these regional mayors might affect how those regions respond [inaudible]?

PREMIER:

No, we've still been speaking with mayors and the incumbent mayors and officials, of course, with our planning. And we know that they respond really well through natural disasters, and I thank all of the mayors out there for doing that, but we're in the fight of our lives here so I really need them in place. They usually would sit in on our Queensland Disaster Management Committee meetings, and hopefully from next week they can start doing that, and that is going to be a great relief for my team.

REPORTER:

Is that one of the key reasons why you wanted the local government elections to proceed, so that you could have those mayors out of caretaker mode and able to fully participate in the disaster group?

PREMIER:

The number one reason the elections went ahead was because my Chief Health Officer gave me advice to say they could go ahead. At any stage if the Health Officer had said to me that the elections couldn't go ahead, they would've stopped, that's point one. Point number two is that yes, I also need mayors in place and they have got a big job over the coming wees and months, so we need them in place and we need to be communicating with them as soon as possible.

REPORTER:

Premier, what would your comments or advice be [inaudible]?

PREMIER:

We haven't seen the final results yet, but I think everybody who puts their hand up for public office, they want to do something good for the community, and I thank everybody who has put their hand up because they don't do it lightly, no one does it lightly.

REPORTER:

Deb Frecklington this morning at her press conference said that ECQ should only do a postal vote [inaudible] for the October state election. Would you agree with that?

PREMIER:

I will leave that to the Attorney to have a look at.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] should there be a postal for the state election?

PREMIER:

Can I tell you, I am not focused on the state election at the moment, I am focused on dealing with COVID-19 which every Queenslander would want me to be focused on at the moment, I will leave that to the Attorney-General to look at.

REPORTER:

We heard from Minister Miles that the curve is flattening, you hear those results coming in, how does that make you feel, and does it change planning at all?

PREMIER:

I think as everyone knows, we put in these measures over a week ago and we're not going to see the results of that flattening the curve until sometime later on this week. So it is encouraging that so many people in Queensland are doing the right thing, and I just urge everyone to keep it up. This is a marathon. This is not just a short race that we're experiencing here, this is going to be a marathon effort and it needs everybody to stay the distance.

REPORTER:

Premier do you have confidence in yesterday's elections, that we will get the actual results and we won't have to go back there?

PREMIER:

Yes, we will get them Josh. My understanding is that the counting is happening today, and I understand that there are scrutineers there as well. So the Electoral Commission needs to smarten its act up and that review will work out exactly what happened, but I thank everyone for their patience.

REPORTER:

Premier, just on schools tomorrow, pupil free days, do you have a gauge on how many students will show up, or just stay home?

PREMIER:

What we did see over the course of last week was a gradual decline in the number of students attending anyway, because there was a choice for parents to make, but what we do know is that we need our schools open. A, they're safe to be open, but secondly, we also need those essential services, those workers out in the workforce, we actually need them to be able to send their students to school. So I've got sisters who are teachers, and their kids will be going to school. I mean anyone who has got a job at the moment in the workforce needs to have that ability so that they can get on with their job. Alright, thank you. We just might end with Brendan to say a few words with the RNA. So, thank you.

BRENDAN CHRISTOU:

I guess from an RNA perspective, like every other organisation in Queensland, we want to lend a hand where we can. At the forefront we're an agricultural society, but we are there for the people of Queensland, and if that means in 2020 we need to be activated as a field hospital, we're very happy to do that. And obviously with the facilities we now have in 202, very different to what they were in 1918, and we think we can lend a hand if needed. Obviously we had to do something similar in the 2011 floods, running the evacuation centre, so we are experienced at doing this, so lets hope that's not required.

REPORTER:

In 1918 they were setting up tents on the main oval, are we seeing a similar set-up this time? What would happen?

BRENDAN CHRISTOU:

I am yet to meet with the details with the planning people on what they'd require, but obviously we've got a lot of varied facilities, but I think the one we're standing in now, the Royal International Convention Centre, with all the catering facilities and the various rooms that we have here is well suited for something a bit better than tents on an oval. But we are happy to do whatever is required.

REPORTER:

It is pretty extraordinary to think that at a time when we should be having the Ekka, thousands of patients might be here at the site.

BRENDAN CHRISTOU:

2020 is different for all of us and normally at this time of the year we're in full planning mode for the Ekka. Obviously it is very different. Some of our agricultural competitions have been able to progress this year, the Ekka isn't just the 10 days they actually run throughout the year, and there some competitions like feedlot competitions that probably will be able to continue to run. There's been others that we've already had to cancel because of the timing and the restrictions, and that's okay, there's bigger things at play this year for all of us.

REPORTER:

Just to confirm [inaudible] but the Ekka has been officially cancelled, has it/



BRENDAN CHRISTOU:

We actually hadn't, I mean a couple of weeks ago – and I guess things change every day – we thought we would make a call in the middle of June, and that gave us time to either say yes or no and obviously as the social distancing restrictions have been coming out, daily sometimes, that's looking less and likely so we're very aware that it is very unlikely that the Ekka will progress in its normal format this year.

REPORTER:

Confirm, I think you said that international quarantine, that 86 people?

STEVE GOLLSCHEWSKI:

Yes, there was a flight, that included crew, so 77 people were given notices.

REPORTER:

So crew obviously don't have to because they go on to another job.

STEVE GOLLSCHEWSKI:

Yes, we didn't include them.

[ENDS]

Released under RTI-DPC

Engagement: Press conference

Topic: COVID-19 update

Speaker/s: Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk, Chief Health Officer Dr Jeannette Young, Health Minister Steven Miles, Police Commissioner Katarina Carroll, State Disaster Coordinator Steve Gollschewski

Airdate: 30 March 2020

Duration: 31 minutes 19 seconds

E&OE

PREMIER:

Good afternoon everybody. Well we just finished our Queensland Disaster Management Committee meeting. And from the outset, I want to thank Queenslanders for doing the right thing. I mean, the majority of people, when I'm out and about and I'm seeing people, they are doing the right thing. And thank you so much because together we are going to make a big difference. We know we have a goal of flattening that curve, and that's exactly what we want to see and that's exactly what we want to do. So our numbers now in Queensland are 689, they went up by 33 overnight. And that's been consistent for the last couple of days, so I'm very encouraged by that. But we can't rest on our laurels, we got to keep working hard, and we need to do everything we possibly can to flatten that curve even more.

The Prime Minister announced last night that following on from our National Cabinet meeting that we would be limiting both indoor and outdoor gatherings to two persons, and the exceptions of course are your household. Now, this is really important. We have seen a lot of people out and about, all over gym equipment, in playgrounds, a lot of different families coming together, using the equipment. We can't do this. I know it sounds really tough, but we can't do it at this time. And these measures are going to be put in place for a month. So let's see how they go and let's see if we can flatten that curve. And Dr Young is going to explain a bit more about why we need to do this. It is absolutely very important.

I also want to just mention a couple of other things. So our borders to New South Wales, we will be moving to stricter enforcement on Friday for our borders. We are still seeing a lot of people coming across our borders, and it has got to stop. So I am sending a message to New South Wales and to Victoria. Yes, we love you. We would love you to visit Queensland. Not now. Come back when we are right through this, and we will share the love around, but we really need everyone to only come across the border if you have a permit. And our State Disaster Coordinator will talk to that in a moment. The other important issue, of course, is our most vulnerable members of our society, and of course, we need to do more to protect those people. So Dr Young will also outline, but we are talking about those, especially over 70, that have those underlying health conditions, and over 60, but also our Indigenous

Australians over 50, who have one or two underlying chronic diseases. We need to make sure that people, where possible, are staying at home. I know we can all say it together, stay in your state, stay in your suburb, practise social distancing, and stay safe, and we're going to save lives if we do that. So really, really simple things that we can all do to make a difference. And we are all practising the social distancing, and I want to thank Queenslanders for doing that.

Just a quick update, too, about education. Of course, we have got pupil-free this week, and we have students and essential workers turning up. I had a lady who stopped me this morning, and she was quite emotional, and she said thank you so much for letting my kids be able to go to school, because both she and her husband actually work, and they were very stressed about what was going to happen. And Minister Grace and our departments are working together about looking at some long-term measures we can put in place for those essential workers over the coming weeks and months. I think it is critical, and we are paying a lot of attention to that. And finally, it looks like we have nearly got all of our boarding school kids back home. A couple of them... Sorry, a number of them are doing some self-isolation at the moment before going out to remote communities, and I just want to thank everyone. It has been a huge effort to get our kids back home to their remote communities. I will hand over to Dr Young. She will give us an update, and then of course we have got the Police Commissioner, our State Disaster Coordinator, and then we're happy to take questions the end.

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

So there has been quite a few changes over the last few days, but a lot of the messages remain exactly the same. The first message is, if you are sick, please stay at home. Seek advice, so ring 13-Health, or ring your GP, but if you are sick with any symptoms at all, please stay at home. That is really important at this time. Now, decisions were made at National Cabinet to reduce the number of people who different groups can get together with. So there are a few things here. The first one is that everyone should be staying at home, except for four different situations. So this is everyone out in the community. The first one is to go and buy essential needs. So food, going to the pharmacy, so essential supplies. But you should do that as little as you need to. So I would recommend going back to the old-fashioned way that we used to do it, which was to write out a shopping list, know what you want to buy, go in, buy it and leave. Don't stay there and look around or catch up with people. Go to the shops and do that quickly and efficiently. That's the first.

The second is that if you can't work from home – so please, everyone should be speaking to their employer if they could work from home – if you can't work from home, then of course you still can go to work, and for those children of essential workers, or specific children who are more vulnerable, they can go to school. But other than that, people shouldn't be leaving. Then the third exemption, for reasons why people can leave their home, is for exercise. So to get out. But that is exercise with one other person, or with their family members. It's not going to big gatherings. It's really managing that so you are not exposed. Then the fourth is to access healthcare or to provide care to someone you are responsible for. So for your elderly relatives, for instance.

So they are the only four reasons that people should be leaving their own home, because we know, with this virus, that there are a couple of things you can do to protect yourself. One is to maintain a 1.5 metre distance from everyone around you. And the second is to limit the number of people you come into contact with. So it is really important that everyone thinks, who do they need to actually come into contact with, and to decrease the numbers. So when you are out and about, it is a maximum now of two people in a gathering, and when you are at home, it is a maximum of two people in the house, unless, of course, with your family members. So that's really important to work through those.

Now, we have very strict processes at our international border, so anyone coming through our international border, of course there are some exemptions, but the vast majority are being required to go into hotel accommodation that is provided through the State Government working with the Commonwealth. To go into that accommodation for 14 days, because the vast majority of our cases are still coming from people coming through our international border. Then we are starting to see cases coming through our domestic border. So police have put that system in place, to work with anyone coming into Queensland from elsewhere in Australia. And that's very important, because although we have got some transmission in our communities in Queensland, it's nowhere to the same degree as is currently occurring both in Sydney and Melbourne. So it is very important, as you heard from our Premier, that people don't come from other states to holiday in Queensland. We still need people from other states for certain situations to come into Queensland, and that's being carefully managed. Thank you.

MINISTER MILES:

Well, that extra 33 confirmed positive cases brings Queensland's total to 689. Of those, seven are currently in intensive care, five are requiring ventilation. The 81 per cent of all of our cases were people who acquired the disease overseas, and a further 15 per cent were direct contacts of those travellers from overseas. And so that explains the reducing numbers that we are currently seeing, as the number of returning travellers from overseas decreases. We saw significantly less yesterday at the airport and would expect that to be less again with the three flights arriving into Brisbane airport, three international flights arriving into Brisbane International airport, today. From here on in, though, it's our social distancing initiatives that will allow us to suppress community transmission, and that's why these new social distancing limitations are being put into place. I understand how hard they will be. They effectively mean that anyone who doesn't live alone can't have visitors, and that's going to be very challenging. You know, my wife's at home with my kids today, and they would, I am sure, love to have friends over to play with, but these rules won't allow that. That's how strong they are. But it's what we need to do in order to suppress that community transmission, once the benefits of reducing overseas travel returnees starts to diminish.

COMMISSIONER CARROLL:

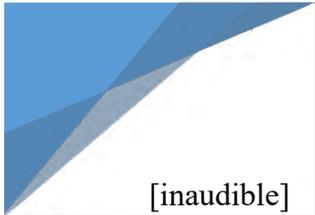
Good afternoon, I want to speak a little bit about compliance. You would all know that since this began several weeks ago, we have had an exceptional relationship with Queensland Health, and started doing a lot of compliance before the enforcement rules came in. During that period of time we conducted some 1,853 self-quarantine compliance checks, however in the last week or so, we got some 231 complaints through police link about people not abiding

by the compliance rules, as a result we did check up on 210 quarantine and salt compliance checks, and they actually were operating within the rules, I am pleased to say the public and the community is listening and a sincere thank you for that. What we have also done in the last week is checked up on 3567 non-essential businesses, obviously that have closed down over the past week and they have also been compliant, a sincere thank you. Where we have had some issues in the past two weeks is on the weekend of the 21st and 22 March, police attended 600 noisy parties. This went up significantly the last weekend to 900. What's been occurring obviously as people haven't been allowed to go out to clubs they are congregating in houses. What that means for us obviously is an extraordinary amount of resources that have been diverted to looking after complaints and noisy parties and not where we should be concentrating our efforts. However, as a result of what you have just heard the new rules from today police should not be getting anymore noisy party complaints. Like I said it does divert our resources, while we have been extraordinarily patient and once again I thank the public for assisting us with this, it has always been a strategy around communication and compassion but, certainly there is a strong enforcement focus we will take, that if people aren't abiding by these very strict rules, and they are therefore a very good reason, for our health and your health, that enforcement will result if these rules aren't abided by. So, like I said an extraordinary increase in noisy party complaints, however with the new rules partying should not be taking place in people's households, it should just be your family and your household. Thank you, Premier?

STEVE GOLLSCHESKI:

Good afternoon. Just to further and explain what will be happening with the change posture with our borders from Friday. With the road borders what we have seen is an approach when we have been processing people and asking them to get online and ask for an exemption. We've seen a large number of people – over 1,100 that we've had to order into self-quarantine as they've come into Queensland. That will change as of Friday. Those people will not be allowed into Queensland. Anyone that would've otherwise been brought in and asked to self-quarantine will be asked to turn around. Police officers will have the ability to enforce that. And if anyone decides not to follow that they will run the risk of committing an offence and having enforcement action taken against them. So that posture will be in place as of Friday – there will be harder border closures, but we'll have messaging going out to make sure everyone understands what's happening with that. Similarly, our border measures are working quite effectively so at the domestic airport we're seeing a seamless process of that, and the international airport bringing that in during the weekend we've had 94 people go into quarantine isolation – 89 of which are housed at hotels at the airport. Those not being there are people with special needs case. I just want to reinforce what the Commissioner has said. The overall compliance of the Queensland community has been outstanding – we're getting through this so far because we are working together collaboratively at a whole-of-government level, at all layers and our community is listening to the messaging. This is going to go on for some time yet so please continue to listen to what we say. Things may well get stricter as we saw yesterday at the RNA with the planning around the hospital options – we are doing planning for all types of contingencies we have to use going forward. But to date because of the cooperation with our community we're in a good space. Thank you.

REPORTER:



[inaudible]

PREMIER:

So can I say we've acted very efficiently here in Queensland and that rule is in place now. It is in place now so everyone needs to obey by that rule.

REPORTER:

What are the penalties?

PREMIER:

\$1,300 dollars is my understanding.

REPORTER:

And what do you say to people who might be going "oh a month, that's a long time to be doing that?"

PREMIER:

I know, and look, it's really frustrating. And guess what everyone, we've all got to abide by this. This is about flattening the curve and saving lives. We are not in the position of the United States and Italy. But let me make it very clear – if we don't do this, and we don't flatten the curve our hospital staff are going to be stretched to the limit. So this is about us doing something that is going to save a life and put less stress on our doctors, and our nurses and our paramedics and all of our health professionals who are going to be working double shifts for many months ahead.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

PREMIER:

I might get the Commissioner to talk a bit more about the noisy parties but now is not the time – I hate to say this – now is not the time for fun. I mean, it's tough everyone, lets get through this. It's going to be a long, hard six months. These measures we put in place are for a month. But this long, hard six months means if we all do this we will all come out the other end. I don't want to see those scenes happening in other countries happening in Australia, so we're doing the right thing. I see everyone's pitching in, we're doing the right thing so come lets just keep doing it together.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

PREMIER:

Yes. Exactly. So what we have like the State Disaster Coordinator mentioned, over 1,100 people have gone into self-isolation. And what that means is that we have to do checks and check up on them and make sure they're complying. I need my resources doing other things in terms of making sure we are contact tracing every single known contact of a person who

has COVID-19. So my message to the southerners is please do not come to Queensland. If you've got an exemption you can come in for essential work or compassionate grounds. But no permit, no entry.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]...does that throw out yesterday's 10 people in a house....

PREMIER:

Yes, yes it does...I'll get Dr Young to talk about that in a bit more detail. But the National Cabinet decided it was best if we adopted this as a nation to make sure we are doing everything possible. If we throw everything at this in the next month lets see if we can flatten that curve. And the signs in Queensland are quite encouraging. I'm not going to rest on my laurels, but the signs are encouraging Josh. You know, you don't want to be looking back in six months' time to say "oh, if only we'd done that".

REPORTER:

Just with yourself and we've seen overseas with the UK ministry and things...have you had to take precautions yourself like having the Deputy Premier in another location and things like that?

PREMIER:

We have a split system at the moment so we actually have very few ministers turning up, all the others are online. So we are working to a restricted aspect but I'm getting on with my job. The thing I miss most is meeting people, so it's hard on me at the moment too Josh.

REPORTER:

...those four things that people can go out for...is that being enforced now? In Tasmania they've made that law today.

PREMIER:

It's in place now. As we speak.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

PREMIER:

It's about going out. Say you've got three people who are going out exercising in a park, that's an infringement.

REPORTER:

Sorry what I meant was you know there's a list of...you can't go out unless for education, work, medical appointments, whatever, whatever...that list of four. Is that law? That's what Tasmania has made law today?

PREMIER:

Yes it is. So we need everyone to do the right thing okay? So we need to make sure the clear messages are getting out to the community to make sure everyone is doing the right thing.

REPORTER:

Premier what's the next step here if the curve isn't flattened under these very strict controls, what is the next step?

PREMIER:

Well...I don't even want to talk about that Lane because we are putting in place these tough measures. National Cabinet is meeting up to three times a week so there's a lot of thought going into this, and Dr Young meets every single day with all of her state counterparts, making sure that they are presenting the best possible health advice to the national Cabinet, and this advice was adopted.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]

PREMIER:

No. This only just came in place today.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]

PRIME MINISTER:

I don't think so, but I'll get the police to address that.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, you know, I am quite sure that there's Ethical Standards Command that can do investigations there. But these are extraordinary times everyone, and I know that our police officers work very hard and they only want the best and to protect our community. And, like I said, we want to flatten that curve. There is no use in six months time looking back in retrospect saying 'How come we lost a loved one in our family? Oh that's right, because all these people went and had parties.'

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes. Yeah, okay. I might get... Who wants to do that?

COMMISSIONER CARROLL:

Thank you. So, as of today those powers are in. So our ticketing will come into effect tonight. So today will see us, if we get called to anything, we will caution people and obviously try and be compassionate, and obviously talk them through it. But if we get called to a noisy party and there is ten people at that party that shouldn't be there, they shouldn't be at that house, they can expect to be ticketed. It is \$1,334. Not only those that are attending, but also people that obviously own the household and are engaged in the party. This is a very significant time. We have been given very extraordinary powers for the safety of the community, and we have not issued an enforcement notice yet. Every check we have done, people have been compliant. So I sincerely thank you for that. And even to the extent of the 900 parties that we had, most of them were within that rule of ten people. However, that has dramatically now changed. So in your household it should just be your family. And please, like I said, the community has been absolutely amazing, and we do not want to start enforcing things unless we have to.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible] will police have the power to [inaudible]?

COMMISSIONER CARROLL:

So what we are doing is working through what additional... So, we do have powers, our own powers, and this just gives us that additional power to take enforcement action. So we are getting further advice as to what we do when we get into a person's household, so that is coming through tonight. However, this is today. Obviously the powers are in from today and we will be cautioning people until we get the enforcement powers tonight. But can I ask that people cooperate with us? This is for four weeks at this stage, and we will do everything we can to make sure that we obviously communicate this, that we are as compassionate as we can be, and the last thing we want to do is take enforcement action, and we will only do that when we have to.

REPORTER:

Commissioner, a hotline in New Zealand [inaudible] can dob-in their neighbours. If somebody wants to dob-in their neighbour, can they call Policelink or do we have a special [inaudible]?

COMMISSIONER CARROLL:

Yeah. So there is actually a couple of ways that is happening at the moment. Some people are going through the Health helpline, some people are actually going to Policelink. And what we are doing is triaging that information, and as a result there has been over 200 complaints just this week. So we get that information and we will then physically send people out to check. What has happened, and the Premier touched on this, the backend has been extraordinary. There is people doing data entry, there is people making phone calls to make sure that people are self-quarantining. So the backend is literally hundreds, if not thousands, of people working in the backend, as well as physically going out and checking on compliance, as well as all the agencies that are working together at all the borders as well.

REPORTER:

Commissioner, can you just explain the difference between ten people [inaudible] and they are looking at having guests?

COMMISSIONER CARROLL:

If you have got your own family in your household you should not be looking at having guests. That's very clear. So, on the weekend people were having parties. They were hosting themselves (sic) and nine others, so a lot of people actually kept within that ten persons parameters. However, as of today it should be your family, other you have someone coming over for work reasons or educational purposes. I think we should get you get Jeannette to provide you more clarity, because this is extraordinarily important as of today. Thanks Jeannette.

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Yes. So, people should be staying in their own homes. There are four exceptions to that. First, to go out and buy essential supplies, essentially food. Secondly, for exercise so that you can go out and have a walk or go for a run. But you can't go to parks with equipment, those sorts of places. Thirdly is to access healthcare for yourself or to provide assistance to a vulnerable person. And then fourthly, to attend work or for education purposes. So they are the only four reasons that a person should be leaving their home. So on top of that, you should only have a gathering of two people, except when you are in your own home then of course you can have your own family. But as soon as you've got two people and a family, you can't invite anyone else. And then similarly, going outside your home you are limited to two people, except of course if you are going to the shops there will be other people there, if you're going to work or to education, or if you are seeking healthcare. But otherwise there are only two people who can be in a gathering. So if you've got a personal trainer, it is you and the personal trainer – no-one else. So...

REPORTER:

If you don't live with your partner, say they live in a share house with three other people, are you not allowed to go and visit your partner anymore, because it would breach the two-person rule?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

So ideally, your partner should come and visit you, rather than you go and visit your partner. But there are exemptions within the arrangements for extended kinship-type arrangements, where you've got children maybe living across two households. So there are those exemptions there. But essentially the aim is very, very much to decrease the numbers of contacts you have with other people, because we know that reduces your risk.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible] my grandmother for instance, [inaudible]?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Again, it is all about limiting. So it would be a good idea in that situation that you take turns, and maybe one of you does it for one week and limits your grandmother's exposure to

people, so that it's not different people going all the time. This is all about just limiting risk. So we know people can get quite mild disease, but they will still spread the virus. So people don't necessarily know when they've started to become infectious. So if you go and limit your exposure to people, and if you can limit the exposure of the most vulnerable people to people, that would be best.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

I'm not sure of those specifics, no.

REPORTER:

And with the numbers that we are seeing in intensive care now, is that pretty much where we thought we would be at this point in time? Or better or worse or...?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

We expected that of the people who contracted the disease, that 80 percent would be mild and be able to be looked after at home, and 20 percent would need to be hospitalised. And of that 20 percent, a quarter would need to be in intensive care. Now, we are not seeing as high numbers, but I believe that's because we have such enormous testing capacity in Queensland. So we are testing all of the mild cases, so we are seeing fewer than we expected to see, but I really think that's because we are just doing so much testing, which is critically important, because when we know people have the disease we can then contract trace and we can then ask those people to isolate, and therefore not spread the infection to other people.

REPORTER:

And doctor, early in the piece people were predicting about one-in-five or 20 percent of Queenslanders might get this, with perhaps a 1 percent fatality rate. Is that still one of the priorities [inaudible]?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Yes. That is what we are still planning for. We are getting more information as we see this spread to other countries overseas, so we are looking very, very carefully at what is happening in Europe, and what is happening in the United States, and in the UK. So we are really looking at that, because what we are starting to see is a little bit different to what we saw in China, which you would expect.

REPORTER:

Doctor, there are still some people using dating apps for casual sex. What would your advice for those people be?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Well, it is important that we all limit our contacts – that is really important. So we should, wherever possible, use other forms of contact and communication with people. I think it is



Transcript

really important to use Facetime, to use the internet, to use Skype – whatever other means, so that people don't physically come into contact.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]

PREMIER:

Yeah. My understanding is that most states and territories will have to legislate, so there will be an omnibus bill with any other things that we need to do.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]

PREMIER:

No, because it will be retrospective anyway. Okay?

[ENDS]

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Station: ABC News 24

Program: Press Conference

Interviewee: Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk, Attorney-General Yvette D'Ath, Health Minister Steven Miles, Chief Health Officer Dr Jeannette Young

Date: 31 March 2020

Duration: 26:20 minutes

E&OE

PREMIER:

When I went for a walk this morning, and people were practicing the social distancing and doing the right things, so, please, everyone keep it up. We need everybody on the team. Today we have overnight 55 new cases bringing our total to 734. And we have conducted over 46,800 tests. And Minister Miles will talk a bit more about that, and we know that people are doing the right thing and we need them to keep doing the right thing. But today I want to make an important announcement. Today I can announce my government will be bolstering our effort to contact-trace and to be tracking even more our people who are under quarantine and self-isolation orders. This is really important. We need to be throwing everything that we have at this to make sure that we are helping Health do this enormous job. So I have appointed Yvette D'Ath, she is my Attorney-General, and she will be assisted with some law enforcement agencies and her Department of Justice to bolster even more that absolute tracking of people that have been put into self-isolation. So in terms of the number, the 743, the Department of Health have contacted 50,000 people relating to that 743. So an enormous effort. You can see that Health is doing everything they possibly can. I want to commend Stephen Miles and Dr Young and her team. And they have a unit of 500 people who are doing that contact-tracing. Well I've said we will throw whatever we need at it. So any extra additional resources that Dr Young needs, my government will deliver. It is also really important that we need to make sure we are providing our services, of course, to the public, but I need my public service to respond to where I need them to work the most efficiently, and that is really important. In relation to the orders and that means if you have been put into quarantine or have been told to go home and self-isolate, there are some 40,212 orders that have been issued. So we have been doing this since the end of January. That is a very high figure and of course we have said the importance of people not going to the shops, not going out, but staying in and following that two weeks, that 14 days of being on that order. So, Yvette's team will be bolstering that effort to make sure that they are tracking those people's movements, and we will be getting some of the best and brightest of law enforcement agencies to assist Yvette D'Ath with this very important job. This is an Australian-first. I want to commend the Department of Health for all of their work, but now we are bolstering the Department of Health with the help of DJAG, the Justice department and law enforcement agencies. So I might hand over to Yvette D'Ath to say a few words, and then we will hear from Minister Miles and Dr Young. Thanks Attorney.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

Thank you Premier. So as we know, the work of Queensland Health has been incredible to-date in their contact-tracing and identified those who have tested positive and those who have come in contact with people who have tested positive, and those most at risk. It is really important that we do everything possible to support Health in this job. I have been receiving briefings from Queensland Health about just the significant work they are doing in contact-tracing, and I have to say they are leading the country in this area. We want to make sure that when Health says, 'We need to ramp this up', we are there ready to support them in whatever they need to do that. Also, when people are put on quarantine and isolation orders, we need the public to understand this - these are not voluntary orders, they are enforceable at law and they will be enforced. This is the only way we can save lives in this State, is making sure that anyone who has received a notice to quarantine or isolate understand the significance of that order. So we will set up a team that will enforce, monitor, work with people who are on these orders to ensure they understand the importance of compliance, because we need them to understand. You can't pop down to the shops, you can't go out for a walk, you should not be leaving your home if you are on a quarantine or isolation order. We will be supporting those efforts to help trace, to help monitor and to ensure compliance of those. And we will also work with our law enforcement agencies and those who are ensuring that those public directives are being complied with out in our community. We cannot emphasise enough how significant this is and how important this is, and that is why the Palaszczuk Government is going to throw absolutely everything at the enforcement, the monitoring and tracking of these individuals on these orders. We will work with the Commonwealth. Together we will ensure that people are complying with these orders and keeping everyone safe at home.

PREMIER:

Thank you, Minister?

MINISTER MILES:

Thanks, Premier. As the Premier outlined, we have 55 additional positive cases overnight, bringing our total to 743. That has been relatively stable over recent days. Of them, 65 are in hospital, 7 of those are in intensive care and 5 of them are currently being ventilated. It takes 7 to 14 days before new social distancing measures have an impact on the rate of infection and so the stabilisation reflects measures put in place in recent weeks. Queensland has one of the highest and strongest testing regimes in the world. We have now tested 46,845 people. Our positive rate is 1.6 per cent, below the national testing positive testing rate of 1.88 per cent. And that national rate is one of, if not the best in the world. Our fantastic teams in the public health units in 14 of our hospital and health services have done just an incredible job of tracing all of the contacts of each of those 743 positive cases. They have traced roughly 50,000 people. Every contact-tracing exercise can involve up to 300 phone calls or contacts. We have, in the process, issued more than 40,000 orders on Queenslanders that they are to isolate or quarantine. As part of that contact-tracing exercise, we have a public health alert for people in Cairns who might have been at the Edmonton PCYC on the 14th of March. There was a wrestling competition at the PCYC on the 14th of March. Given that is more than two weeks ago, there is no need for anyone to take any action if they are currently well. However, if they became unwell in the 14 days from the 14th to 28th, they are urged to seek medical

advice, if they became unwell with respiratory symptoms. As you can see, this exercise of identifying where every positive case has been and who they might have come into contact with is very, very substantial. Our health teams have been doing a great job at that tracing and contacting of people. However, we very much welcome the support - this additional support from the Justice department, both to bolster our contact-tracing but also importantly ensure that we are tracking and managing those who are being asked to quarantine and isolate to ensure they are complying with those orders. It is incredibly important that everyone does comply with those orders. They are not voluntary, they are under the law. And it is entirely appropriate that our law enforcement agencies are charged with the responsibility of enforcing those laws and enforcing those orders. It will help us ultimately to reduce the spread of this virus.

CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER:

The coronavirus virus is a respiratory virus, so spread by people coughing and sneezing on other people. So the way to stop people getting it is to maintain that 1.5 metre distance at all times and also decrease the number of people that you come into contact with. That is why all of these arrangements have been put in place. So now people cannot gather in groups of more than two for any reason, unless they are in their own home with their family, their normal family members who live in that home, or they are out buying essential supplies, accessing healthcare, providing care to a vulnerable person, exercising, but then only in groups of two or their own family, or attending work for essential work or attending education for essential education. This is the time for all of us who don't need to be out and about to remain in our own home so that we minimise spread. That is really important. So you've heard all those figures about the number of orders that have been issued to date and that is so important because then we won't need to contact-trace those hundreds of people for each case. We will only need to contact-trace the people in the home and the people who are out at work. It also means that when people are at work, they should try and limit who they are coming into contact with at work. So that if people have to go to work and there are certain essential services that of course must continue, then try and remain in groups so that if someone gets the infection in that group, that group will then go into quarantine, rather than an entire workplace. That's another important strategy for people to think about. If people can just look at the two principles of maintaining 1.5 metres distance from anyone at any point in time, and decreasing the number of different people you come into contact with. Those two things are really important. It is great to see these additional resources that Health is going to have to be able to contact-trace, because we know that the quicker we can do that contact-tracing, the more effective it will be. And it means that we can then put those people that we believe have had significant contact into home quarantine so that when they get it, if they get it, then they are already in quarantine and we only need to contact-trace the people in that household, not more broadly. That's the reason that we have asked over 40,000 Queenslanders to go into quarantine or to go into isolation. Now, just to explain the difference again, quarantine is about well people. So when we ask someone to quarantine, they are perfectly well and we are asking them to go into quarantine for 14 days because there is a risk that they will develop the infection and we want to minimise the number of people they will potentially give that infection to. That's why that is now occurring for people coming through our international border in designated hotels. In those hotels the people will be kept quarantined from each other so that they will be in a room with their partner if they've been in contact with that

partner up to that point, so those two people, but not with other people, and that's important. Now, when we ask someone to go into isolation, that's probably even... well, it is, it's even more important to go into quarantine, because someone we're asking to go into isolation is sick, which means they are able to transmit that infection at that point in time. We want them to be in absolute isolation. That's the difference. We do not want them to come into contact with anyone in their family in their home. We want them to remove themselves from the rest of their family and stay in a different part of their household. That's really important because they will otherwise transmit it because they actually have the infection. So that's the other thing that is very, very important. So it's really – if I could go back and say -- it's about two things: maintaining your distance from people, but also limiting the number of people you have contact with. Thank you.

REPORTER:

Premier, are you bolstering [inaudible] other departments?

PREMIER:

No, it is existing staff. It is going across our different agencies, but predominately from JAG. There may be additional people from law enforcement agencies that are going in there. They have one job, and their job is to make sure that people are complying. I can't stress to everyone how important this is. We're throwing everything at it and I think Queenslanders should feel a great sense of satisfaction that their government is taking this really seriously.

REPORTER:

Are you suggesting that public servants be used to actually do contact tracing over the phone...?

PREMIER:

No, Health officials are doing that at the moment. So Department of Justice people will assist, but in terms of making sure that people are complying with their orders, we know that police are checking up on people. So let me give you that warning out there to people who are on those orders, police are checking up on you. But the Department of Justice people will be contacting you and making sure that you know that you must be staying home for the protection of not just yourself, but your family and your community. This is really important that everyone does this at this time.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]?

PREMIER:

No, this is the 40,000 orders where people have been told that you must self-isolate or must go into quarantine. So we're talking about the orders, we're not talking about the measures at the moment about vulnerable people. I will address that in more detail tomorrow.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]?

PREMIER:

I might get Dr Young to address that one, so if there's any more questions for me.

REPORTER:

Are there people being housed in hotels around South Bank? Are we moving beyond the hotels at the airport and are state authorities helping with that?

PREMIER:

We are identifying accommodation that is available for people coming back from overseas. Now we don't have the large volumes that are coming back in anymore and the numbers are dropping dramatically. But there are more people coming back, Australians returning home, that are coming into mainly Sydney and Melbourne airports. But we do still have a couple of flights a day coming in and under the strict quarantine orders that the National Cabinet has agreed on, they must go into quarantine. It is really important because we're seeing a large number of infections from high risk countries that people are coming from.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]?

PREMIER:

I don't have those details with me, but we can find out for you.

REPORTER:

Premier, are you getting closer to a situation where you are closing the south east?

PREMIER:

There is no north Queensland border, so can everyone just calm down on that? There is no north border, we are one state. What we have done is we have protected the most vulnerable in our community, those remote Indigenous communities. We have said very clearly, because of their remoteness and also because 50 plus and over if you're an Indigenous Australian with one or more chronic conditions, you are at higher risk. We have taken the measures to basically ensure that those communities in a semi-lockdown process. And that's the right thing to do, I 100 per cent support that decision.

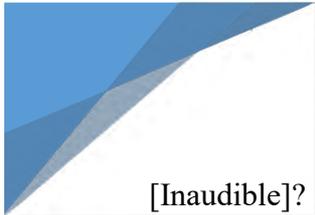
REPORTER:

[Inaudible]?

PREMIER:

Correct. So that's the medical professionals and the Department of Health officials that are... when a person's confirmed, they are working out who that person has come into contact with, and they are meticulous in going through and finding out who else they've been in contact with and whether they have any...

REPORTER:



[Inaudible]?

PREMIER:

Yes. Okay, so this is a huge job and it's going to get bigger. It's not going to get smaller. This job is going to get bigger. So what my government is doing is we are preparing now. We are making sure that we have people trained, and people can assist Minister Miles and Dr Young in their important work.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]?

PREMIER:

The Police Minister will discuss that later on, but there will be exemptions, especially for our primary producers.

REPORTER:

Premier, just with the bolstered efforts to deal with compliance checks, were those people who will not [inaudible]?

PREMIER:

I think I sort of addressed that. I said that the police are already doing that, but we will have officials that will be ringing them a couple of times a day to make sure they're doing the right thing. So it's that contact. It's that constant contact from people to say are you doing the right thing, what are you doing, and sending police around to double check.

REPORTER:

Just on the Gold Coast, we're still seeing crowds at beaches and [inaudible]?

PREMIER:

Okay look, I've got a big warning here. I spoke to Tom Tate about this yesterday. Everyone, you got to do the right thing. People live around our beaches, they should be allowed to walk on our beaches, but if we are going to see mass gatherings, mayors may close beaches. So I'm giving a warning today – do the right thing. Come on, it's not fair to do the wrong thing because lives are at risk. And we need to make sure that people are absolutely doing the right thing, and police will be out there observing people if they are not doing the right thing.

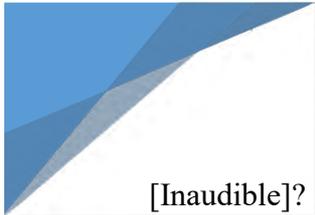
REPORTER:

This might be a question for Steven. There seems to be a different [inaudible] enforce 10, we will enforce 2?

MINISTER MILES:

That's correct. The National Cabinet endorsed that the maximum size for a gathering should be two, and our approach has been to adopt what the National Cabinet has endorsed.

REPORTER:



[Inaudible]?

CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER:

We don't have any healthcare workers who've been infected in the healthcare site, so at work.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible] in ICU, do you know the ages of them? Are they all above say 60 or [inaudible]?

CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER:

Yeah, they're all older people. Yes, we do have those ages for those 7 people.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]?

CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER:

I think at this time it's important that people remember those two principles, which is maintain a 1.5 metre distance, so my recommendation to people is wherever there are trolleys that are made available to you like there are at Bunnings, or at Woolworths or Coles or indeed Big W, use a trolley. That's around that 1.5 metre, and just use that as a way of reminding yourself, because it's so easy to forget that. It's quite a difficult concept, I think, for people because we're humans and we like contact and we like to be able to talk closely to people, so I think get yourself a trolley and use that and maintain that 1.5 metre distance.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]?

CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER:

Same. They have trolleys. Wherever you go, I would genuinely think about using a trolley. Don't use those little baskets, try and maintain a 1.5 metre distance. And also, minimise the number of times you go out. I really think and I've started using it, use a book or something to remind yourself what you need. So go out with a shopping list, wherever it is that you're going, and just be efficient. Go and buy exactly what you want and try and minimise how often you would do that. We've become as a culture, I've done it myself it's easier rather than trying to think and plan ahead, you just go and do it at the time. We no longer have to plan when we go to banks, when we go to post offices, because we can do it online. So that's permeated through our lives. So I think we have to think back a little bit and start thinking how we can be more efficient in how we can use our time outside our own household.

REPORTER:

Have we contact traced everyone from the cruise ships yet?

CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER:

Ah yes, we've done that in Queensland. As soon as we get the manifest we go through and contact trace all the Queenslanders on that manifest.

REPORTER:

Your advice on Saturday was that we were not at an increased risk if we got out and vote and then on Sunday this three person rule came in. People are a little bit confused about why the advice might be a little bit different or confusing. Can you just explain to people why that....

CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER:

There's not confusion except sometimes it takes people a while to catch up to where we're at with advice. So the advice I'm giving today is today's advice. It could change again tomorrow and the day after. So people have really and truly got to go and look for themselves for what the most recent up to date advice is and the best way to get that is from the Queensland Health website or the Commonwealth Government website. It's always being continuously updated, that's important.

REPORTER:

Just briefly Dr, do you know how many people are in these hotels who have come in from interstate or overseas?

CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER:

We do, but I don't have that figure on me. I'm sure that we can get it.

REPORTER:

Just to quickly check, did we see 55 new cases overnight?

CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER:

Yes

REPORTER:

Does that bring us to 744?

CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER:

No it brings us to 743 because we always go back and check cases and as we get more information they might change so an earlier case was deemed not to be a case. That was a very very good pick up. No, we're absolutely at 743 cases but there were 55 new ones in the last 24 hours.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]?

CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER:

I don't have that figure on me

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]?

CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER:

The flu season is always a strain but this year I suspect it will be less of a strain because everything we're doing to manage the coronavirus will also work for flu. So we will see less transmission of flu in our community this year. But having said that, and we've purchased additional supplies of flu vaccine and I know the private sector has additional supplies. I very strongly recommend that everyone go out and get vaccinated against the flu this year. The reason being is those people who get infected with the flu virus and the coronavirus at the same time which of course is possible, will not as well as someone who only gets infected with one or the other.

REPORTER:

Premier, can I just ask you about guns? Victoria banned the sale of guns and ammunition for the time being. Are we looking at that or is it just.....

PREMIER:

I think the Police Minister is coming out. We have looked at exemptions so there will be some exemptions especially, you know we're a big agricultural sector so some primary producers will need exemptions and of course for security and for our law enforcement agencies. So there will be exemptions but yes, we are looking at that for some national consistency. And to your earlier question my memory is 174 people are at the moment currently in quarantine that have come in from international flight.

REPORTER:

Do we know how much the hotels are costing? Is that in the \$1.2 billion announced last week for the health funding?

PREMIER:

We have an agreement with the Federal Government that, at this stage, the State will pick up that cost and we will continue to talk to them about that. And it differs for different states of course because Sydney has much higher numbers than we have but there may be people who are returning back to Brisbane who've come into Sydney and have to quarantine for 14 days and then return home and likewise in Melbourne. Ok, thanks everyone.

[ENDS]



Format: Press conference

Speaker/s: Minister Steven Miles; Minister Coralee O'Rourke; Aaron Harper; Scott Stewart; Chief Health Officer Dr Jeanette Young

Airdate: 1 April 2020

Duration: 35 minutes 20 seconds

E&OE

MINISTER MILES:

Of the 40 additional positive case of COVID-19 in Queensland, overnight one of them is in the Townsville HHS region. That brings to a total of 19 cases here in Townsville out of Queensland's total of 781. None of those cases are currently...sorry. As I understand it, none of those cases are currently in hospital. They are all being treated in isolation at home. Of the 19 cases, 17 we know were acquired from overseas. Across Queensland we have now completed more than 48,000 tests for COVID-19. That remains a very high testing rate and that's bought out by our low positive rate. Our positive rate here in Queensland is roughly 1.5 per cent, nationally it's a bit over 2 per cent and that Australian rate is one of the best in the world. Right here at the Townsville fever clinic they saw 83 people in the last 24 hours, bringing a total of 1,986. It's incredibly important that all Queenslanders are assured that we are working to ensure that their hospital and health services are prepared, not just in the south-east but right across Queensland, even though we still have very low cases in the regions. And that is why Dr Jeannette Young are here at Townsville Hospital today to hear in more detail the Townsville HHS' plans for if and when there is a wider outbreak and I am sure, knowing the fantastic staff of the Townsville HHS right from our clinicians on the ground through to our executives and the board, well-led by Tony Mooney, Townsville locals can be assured they have one of the best health services not just in Queensland, but indeed the world. And I am sure that here on the ground today we are going to hear about the fantastic plans our doctors and nurses, health professionals and support staff have put together to keep Townsville locals, North Queensland locals safe throughout a potential COVID-19 outbreak. Last week we announced the Palaszczuk Government was investing an additional \$1.2 billion into our health services and we would expect Townsville's share of that to be up to \$158 million. That is additional funding going into our health services. Funding for the fever clinic that is already set up, funding for the additional intensive care capacity we expect to need, the additional ward capacity we expect to need, as well as additional services into the community, especially into aged care. Our hospital will reach into aged care facilities to deliver as much care and treatment as we possibly can to people into their home and into their nursing care facility. I propose to ask each of our local MPs to say something very briefly and then Dr Jeannette Young to provide a more detailed update.

MINISTER O'ROURKE:

This morning the Premier announced a new initiative from the Palaszczuk Government and that is our care army. And this is a program that we are working on, I'm actually working directly with Minister Kate Jones on implementing the care army and what we are affectively asking people in our communities to do is to reach out and say that they can actually support a senior in their community. We know that people over the age of 65 who have a co-morbidity are at a high risk of contracting this illness and people over the age of 70 and therefore they have been specifically asked to self-isolate to keep themselves safe. But what we do know is that some of those people do not have the support networks like family and friends that they can call on to provide them with the assistance when they need it. And that might be filling in prescriptions, getting medication, food, making sure that they've got what they need at a time when they need it. So what we're saying is if you don't have anyone in your life that you're currently supporting and you want to help someone, please contact our Community Recovery Hotline on 1800 173 349 and let us know that you are willing to help and we will make sure that you have the opportunity to do so. This is really important, looking after our more vulnerable people in our community is something that all of us can do, band together. It's something we've done in the past and we'll continue to do in the future, but now they need us more than ever.

AARON HARPER:

Great initiative, Minister. Thank you very much and can I just start by thanking our community, our Townsville community for implementing the practical measures of social distancing, staying at home unless it's essential travel, the 1.5 metres, regular handwashing, all of those things are helping us push down the curb and stopping the spread of social contamination. I think that should be applauded and we need to do more. I want to thank our Health Minister for being here and particularly our Chief Health Officer Dr Jeannette Young who I get to work with quite regularly as Chair of the Health Committee. I think we are doing a good job in enforcing those measures right throughout Queensland. I know we're a vast State, some concerns have been raised in regional Queensland, but these practical measures are working, we're asking people to continue to do them. Can I also thank our Health Minister for boosting our local paramedic workforce by 10 officers? Whether it's the doubling of our ICU or the tripling of our emergency department capacity, these are the good planning steps we have in place to assure the people of Townsville that we are responding to any increases. I hope to keep them at double figures, the numbers that we've seen, but let's keep doing all we can do to keep pushing that curve down.

SCOTT STEWART:

Thank you and welcome everyone. It's great to have the Minister here, as well as our Chief Health Officer as well. We know it's important here in Townsville to hear it from the expert and that's why we've got the Chief Health Officer here with us today. I'd like to reach out and say thank you to each and every one of our health workers. We're hearing more and more stories where they are sacrificing time with family to make sure they look after our community. We're hearing more and more stories where they're isolating themselves from their family. I heard a story yesterday from a paramedic who said he couldn't go home and hug his child because he is concerned about passing on any of those viruses that he might come into contact from our community. This is stoic from our frontline services. I applaud

them, they're doing an outstanding job keeping our community safe at the sacrifice of their own family. This is what makes North Queensland strong. When we look after one another, when we follow these messages, these simple messages around washing our hands. Those simple measures will keep us safe. And that's what we need to do. We need to look after each other here in North Queensland. We've done it well through the floods last year, we're doing it now through this particular pandemic. But don't take the foot off the pedal, we need to continue to follow those simple rules set by our Chief Medical Officer, our Chief Health Officer, make sure we follow that right to the letter of the law. But also, I think it's time to thank our medical personnel, our doctors, our nurses, every single person who works in that health service. They're doing an outstanding job looking after us and our community.

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Well it's absolutely lovely to be here, particularly to be here at the Townsville Hospital. I know they're very, very well-prepared to deal with anything that might arise because of the spread of COVID-19. Early on a decision was made that we should put in place testing capacity here because they have a laboratory that actually can do the test. There's very few places that can test today outside major cities, one of them is here in Townsville and the staff here have worked extraordinarily hard to go and get that testing up and running, because we know the most important thing we can do at this stage of the pandemic is to find every potential case, to isolate those cases and to test them. And that requires the work of a lot of people. It requires the work of the public health unit, and I know how much support they've received here in the Townsville Hospital and the work that they've had to do to go out and make sure that every single person, when they're confirmed positive, that anyone they've come into contact with is informed, and, where needed, placed into quarantine. And there have been over 800 people in this area who have been placed into quarantine.

And I want to say thank you to those people. It is extremely difficult to spend 14 days in your own home or, as some people have had to, in a hotel room, but that is so important because this virus, we know it spreads, and if we can find the potential people who are going to get the infection as early as possible we can stop it spreading even further. So you would have seen all of the changes at the borders that have happened to our country. So at our international border, very early on, the Commonwealth Government made the decision to close the border or to limit entry to various different groups as the virus spread around the world, and now today anyone coming through the international border has to go into quarantine in a hotel so that they are totally isolated from other people and totally supported. So that's the first thing.

Then because we haven't had any degree of community spread here in Queensland, a decision was made by our Queensland Government to close our borders, our domestic borders, and the police have been working very hard at both airports and at roads, at our land borders, to manage people coming in from other states. Our biggest concern is those coming to us from Sydney and Melbourne because they do have community spread. That means they don't know everyone in their community who has the infection. So that's happening. Then over the weekend a decision was made by our National Cabinet that is in place and meeting regularly to essentially put a border at the front of every single person's door, so that now people cannot leave their own house unless for one of four purposes.

So the first is to buy essential supplies, people need to be able to leave home to go out and buy food, for example. The second is to access healthcare, because we want people, if they become unwell, to of course access the care that they need. Or, the second one is to provide care to a vulnerable person. So, and you heard about that care package that has been put in place, so we want all of our community to think who's vulnerable in their community and provide support, and of course people to provide the support to vulnerable people in their own family. So that's the second. The third is for exercise – people need to get out and need to get about and to exercise. That's so important and that needs to continue. But it can only be done with your immediate family or in your group of two – so maybe go and play golf with two people in that group, not the regular four, or go and play tennis, two people not doubles. So thinking about how to go out and continue to exercise, so to go for a walk or for a run, but not go on Sundays on the local beach, that's not exercise. It's about going out, physically moving, because we all know how important exercise is to everyone.

Then the fourth group is for those people who genuinely cannot work from home, them to go to work, or, although this is closing, for education purposes. So our schools have gone to pupil free, but of course the children of essential workers can still go to school, and we're seeing around 5 to 10 per cent of children turning up to school this week as a result of that decision. So people can leave their home to go to work or education where they can't do that from home. Then there are some other things that we all need to practise, and I can see we're doing it today. We need to maintain a 1.5 metre distance. If someone's sick, they must stay home. And it doesn't matter what the cause of the illness is, we don't want anything to spread at this time. We don't want flu to spread, we don't want any diseases. So this is the time, if you're sick just stay at home and recover at home. If you're not sure what you should be doing, you can ring your local GP or ring 13 Health and get advice. That's really important.

Then the other part of the equation, and I'm not sure that everyone quite follows, is that it's a numbers – I don't use like to use the game – but it's a numbers issue. The fewer people that one person can come into contact with, the less likely they will get the infection. So if you come into contact with 100 people in a day, you've got 100 times the chance of being infected then if you come into contact with one person in that day. So that is why we're saying that those people who are particularly vulnerable and more likely to get severe complications really need to, as much as possible, stay home and accept help from others.

So that vulnerable group, you did hear earlier but I'll repeat it because it's so important. So that's people who are 65 years of age or over with one or more chronic diseases. And those chronic diseases are being reassessed all the time as we get more information from overseas. But at the moment, they include uncontrolled hypertension, uncontrolled diabetes, heart disease, lung disease or chronic kidney disease – particularly those people on dialysis. So anyone aged 65 or over should be concerned if they have one or more of those. Then all people aged 70 or over should be concerned, plus any of our Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders who are aged over 50. They should be concerned, particularly if they have one or more of those chronic diseases I mentioned before. So it is really tough, I think, what is being asked of people at this stage of people at this stage is really, really hard on people – to remain in your own people with very little interaction other than, of course, using Skype and Facetime and all of those video type interactions is difficult, because we're humans, we need social interaction. But I'd just ask everyone to think that we need to do this

so that we can keep those most vulnerable people in our community because we know, if don't protect them, they're the ones that are going to do really badly. Thank you.

REPORTER:

Jeannette, firstly, I guess police are concerned about the distribution of fake medical supplies. What would be your advice to Queenslanders in regards to that issue who might be going overseas or online to obtain those?

DR YOUNG:

People should always go and get advice from the people that they usually trust. So why trust the internet when we've got fantastic pharmacists in this state? And they have really stood up – they're always good, but at the moment they are brilliant. So they have set in place a process that they can deliver goods to people's homes, so why go onto the internet to get something delivered to your house when you could go to your local trusted pharmacist? So that would be my recommendation – use your normal sources of information, they are there, they are really good and they know exactly what needs to happen. And even better, most of them, if you have a relationship with them already, know you as an individual and know what is best for you and can give you that advice. So go to your local pharmacy and, of course, speak to your GP. The general practitioners across Queensland have done an excellent job. So of them now are doing their consultations via video. So if you've got that technology, do that, then you don't need to go out of your home and it protects everyone. And the Commonwealth, very, very early on, stood up and supported that so anyone can use that technology now, you don't have to be in those certain groups they used to be for.

REPORTER:

You told First Nations people over 50 to be very careful but a large number of First Nations people over 50 are workers in the health service in nursing roles and things like that. Where do they come down on this, which side of the fence should they be sitting on? Should they be more cautious or should they be at work because the workforce for health work is so essential right now?

DR YOUNG:

Right. Every single workforce in Queensland, it doesn't matter what the workforce is, needs to look at their vulnerable workers and work out what is best for that particular worker. Not all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders will have chronic disease so that will be one way of managing it. Some will have several so it's a matter of the manager sitting down with each individual staff member and working out what is best for that staff member. Then there's also issues about where they live and who they're coming into contact with because the other thing is we need to all be careful what we all take home to our own household. So those things, there are no hard and fast rules for this other than those ones about keeping your distance when you leave your home. A lot of those others are not hard and fast. They've got to be sorted through on an individual basis.

REPORTER:

A survey by the AMAQ found 70 per cent of doctor say they don't have sufficient access to PPE. How are the State's levels at the moment?

DR YOUNG:

They're excellent. So, we have sufficient PPE to meet the needs of all of our healthcare workers so that they're not put at any risk when they provide care. Now we do know that some people still aren't quite sure of how to access that PPE so my message to them is that if they're in private practice the Commonwealth has been sourcing large amounts of PPE overseas so all they need to do is go to their local PNH, Primary Healthcare Network and they'll be able to source PPE. Now the issue is that we can not afford to waste it. So although there's enormous capacity coming online down the track, there's a lot of work happening in this space both here in Australia and overseas, that people have to use it wisely. So we did see early on while people were getting themselves use to how to manage things that we saw a significant number of people treating each person who might have the infection. That's all been sorted very, very quickly and so we've seen the use of PPE reduce. So we've just got to be wise in how we use it because we can't be certain how long this will go on for and how long we'll need that PPE but we do know a lot of work is happening. I mean it's very difficult that the major source of surgical masks for instance, in the world happened to be coincidentally Wuhan which is where this outbreak started. The epicentre of the outbreak. So we've got all of those sorts of things. But all of those supply chains are being sorted through.

REPORTER:

More than half of those doctors say they're dipping into their own wallets though to buy PPE for themselves and their staff. Are they just misguided?

DR YOUNG:

Well if they're working in private practice that would, of course, then be part of their tax process. I mean, they would be paying for that out of the incomings from their practice. So they must just have some cash... I don't know, that's their business. I will leave that to them how they do it but PPE is a core part of providing a service so I'm not sure that I know how to answer that one.

REPORTER:

You're in North Queensland today. Is there is plans or considerations to isolate even more communities up here and shut the invisible border that there is?

DR YOUNG:

Well as I mentioned before that's sort of already been done. So we've got our international border that's well and truly closed except to Australians or Queenslanders returning home. Then we've got our state borders which again, don't stop people travelling but anyone coming into Queensland from another state is required to go into 14 quarantine unless there are certain exemptions. And then now we've got, I'd call it a border at every one of our front doors, which means we can only go out for those four very specific purposes. So people shouldn't be coming anywhere in Queensland unless they've got a requirement to do that.

REPORTER:

We're talking about non-essential travel being one of the most aspects of this. So what made this trip to Townsville such an important one?

DR YOUNG:

Because I'm responsible for leading this response across the state and I believe that North Queensland is a very important part of this state, as is all the other parts of the state and that I need to go out and make sure that the community is getting everything that they need. So I wanted to personally come and speak to the leaders here in the Hospital and Health Service and just check whether there is anything that they feel that we need to do more of.

REPORTER:

So is there anything that you need to do more of?

DR YOUNG:

I'll be speaking to them and asking them that question.

REPORTER:

A very large number of...not just political leaders, but also health professionals, doctors have asked for the border around the North Queensland region...north west Queensland and Far North to be closed because our health systems in there, in the medical professionals opinion, can not cope with an outbreak. There's already several health workers in the hospital in isolation and if they see any further it would need to be taking resources from the South East which is already over-taxed at the moment by the amount of coronavirus...or under heavy pressure from the amount of coronavirus diagnosis down there. Is there a plan in the works to isolate North and Far North Queensland or are we going to rule it out?

DR YOUNG:

Well as I've said everywhere in Queensland is now essentially isolated from everywhere else. So, we've closed, due to the Commonwealth's work, the international border into Queensland except for Queenslanders returning home and they have to go into 14 days quarantine in a hotel. Supervised quarantine. Then we've also here in Queensland closed our land borders and our air borders to other states. So that's happened so anyone coming through, there are some exemptions of course but the majority of people coming through are being required to go into 14 days quarantine. Then after the weekend work done by our National Cabinet we've essentially put that border at the front door of every single household in Queensland so that people are only going out for a limited range of essential requirements. So that means people can't go and travel around the state unless there is an essential requirement for them to do it. So it's now in place. Now we're not over-taxed down in Brisbane. So if the North required assistance we would provide that. No different to how we respond every single summer with cyclones, with floods. We have that process in place. And if the North were to have a significant outbreak we would respond and assist. And indeed, we've done modelling and exercises. We've done all that work so we know how we would do it.

REPORTER:

Besides Aboriginal Shire Councils then is that basically meaning that Townsville is as safe as South East Queensland when it comes to coronavirus if we have all those measures in place?

DR JEANETTE YOUNG:

No. Townsville today has 19 people in Townsville who've been confirmed cases. There are more cases down in South East Queensland but we haven't seen community spread. So we haven't seen yet, but of course it will happen. We haven't seen the spread that we've seen down in Sydney and to a lesser extent Melbourne. So that's why we've put in place those land border domestic arrangements. But yes, there are less cases in Townsville per head of population than we're seeing down in the South East corner at this time.

REPORTER:

People in Townsville are reporting a three day wait for test results. Is there a lag at the moment? Why would that be?

DR YOUNG:

There originally was a delay because all of the testing had to be sent down to Brisbane. There's now testing happening here so that will have reduced that. And fairly soon we hope to be able to put testing through our gene expert platforms which are point of care test so then that will decrease even more.

REPORTER:

Is that happening at the hospital?

DR YOUNG:

It will once we've got that testing. So it's going through the TGA in Canberra for approval at the moment and so we should be able to introduce that in the next month or so.

REPORTER:

So Townsville patients who've sent test results off, where are they being processed?

DR YOUNG:

Here.

REPORTER:

In the hospital?

DR YOUNG:

Here for Townsville, but you'll find for the outlying areas they'll have to come into Townsville to be tested. That will improve once we get that new consumable approved.

REPORTER:

What steps have really been taken to ease the pressure off hospital beds and hospital staff? Do you think we need more fever clinics and more testing sites?

DR YOUNG:

Each hospital has that ability to stand up more fever clinics if it's needed but it's also important that we actually concentrate our expertise at dealing with this and where the testing happens. So, we've just had the conversation about the delays in testing. If we go and create more fever clinics in more remote area it will just delay the time it takes for that testing to occur. So, it's a fine balancing act which the Hospital and Health Service has done a lot of work to just work through what is the best way of managing all those conflicting things.

REPORTER:

There are still many people who are not paying attention to the rules that have been put in place to protect people. Can the messaging be more clear for those members of society who are choosing to disobey the new laws that have been put in place?

DR YOUNG:

Yes, so we have a very strong communication plan that's being rolled out, and you'll start seeing those advertisements through TV, through radio through written media to get all those messages out.

REPORTER:

Would it be...

DR YOUNG:

But it is actually more important, I believe, for the whole community to make sure that everyone in the community understands. So if someone is out there, and maybe they're at your local outdoor gym, which now under the new arrangements has been... they've all been closed. So, saying to someone: are you aware of what the messaging is? And for all of us to work together. Because, I must admit you're pretty good at it up here, whenever there's a cyclone coming, whenever there's an incident, everyone seems to know, and seems to know exactly what to do. So, there's been a lot of that work done, with text messaging going out, all of those things but really it is about everyone in the community just making sure that other people understand, and as we heard about the care package, making sure that those older Queenslanders are getting the support and that they understand.

REPORTER:

Just on the Cairns and Noosa clusters, do we know how many confirmed cases are linked to both of those? The one at the restaurant in Noosa and the one at the PCYC?

DR YOUNG:

The Noosa one... I might have to get you that detail, it was a day or so that I last saw it. And similarly, the Cairns one, I only have that one from yesterday, we had four linked to that one. So, it might be best, rather than me giving you a figure, if we could get those two figure.

REPORTER:

Regarding the new coronavirus clinic in Emerald, why did we choose Emerald, and can we expect additional clinics similar to that opening in additional areas?

**MINISTER MILES:**

My understanding is that the Emerald clinic is a primary health care clinic funded from the Commonwealth, so the Commonwealth made funding available for 100 GP and or nurse led fever clinics. That is one of them and we expect to see more of those right across the state. It is incredibly important that our GPs play a really important role here. Our hospitals, if and when there are wider outbreaks, they're going to get very busy and so our GPs will need to do more of the testing, do more of those home teleconference consults, more of the work in aged care and certainly we welcome the opening of that clinic and we would expect more of them right across the state, including here in the north.

REPORTER:

I just wanted to know, do we know how many people from the confirmed cases in Townsville have recovered from COVID-19?

MINISTER MILES:

We don't have a precise figure on that at this stage. Our priority has been getting the data right at the confirmation of cases end, now that we are largely up-to-date with that, we'll have some resources we can put in to contacting people when they've recovered. It is not as simple a task as it was when they were all being treated in hospital. Now the vast bulk are being treated at home, it is harder data to keep track of.

REPORTER:

Will the government introduce voluntary assisted dying laws, and when?

MINISTER MILES:

The committee report was tabled yesterday and I want to thank Aaron Harper for what was an enormous task. He has done the community of Queensland a great service. I haven't had a chance to look at it yet, my focus obviously, has been on the COVID-19 response. Once I've had a chance to look at it, no doubt we will have a discussion about it with the rest of the government.

REPORTER:

The free flu jabs for over 65s, why is that a world-first? How is that different?

MINISTER MILES:

Is it a world-first?

REPORTER:

Apparently. And I guess, how do you expect people to access that with all of the directions that are being given?

MINISTER MILES:

It is incredibly important that everyone in our community gets their flu shot this year. It is probably the easiest thing you can do to make the lives of our doctors and nurses easier. The

more we can restrict the spread of the flu this year, when we expect an outbreak of COVID-19, the less pressure we can put on our hospitals. It is that simple. And so we're urging all Queenslanders to get their flu vaccinations, for people over 65 who are more likely to be in that vulnerable group, they are provided free and they should go to their GP to access them. For the rest of us, we can pay for them at our GP or we provide them free for young people, 0-5 because they spread the flu, and pharmacists now can deliver flu vaccinations to anyone over 10. They need parental consent for anyone between 10 and 16. I understand most pharmacies do them for \$15 or \$20. It is a pretty inexpensive investment compared to the impact of getting the flu. I had the flu a few years ago, it knocked me around and I'll be getting my flu shot really soon.

REPORTER:

So just confirming, no total number of recovery cases that we know?

MINISTER MILES:

Not accurate... we could give you a figure but it wouldn't be an accurate one, we are working to get an accurate one.

[ENDS]



Station: Channel 7 Periscope

Program: -

Interviewees: Health Minister Steven Miles, Chief Health Officer Dr Jeannette Young, Dr Don Mackie - Executive Director, Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service

Date: 2 April 2020

Duration: 27:25 minutes

E&OE

MINISTER MILES:

Well overnight I can confirm that we have had 57 further positive cases of COVID19 in Queensland. That represents an ongoing stabilization of our positive rate over recent days. We now have 835 in total, 60 of those are currently in hospital. The rest are either recovered or being treated at home. Nine patients are in ICU. Eight of them are receiving ventilation. Here in Cairns, there are no further cases. There are 24 confirmed positive cases. One that we know of has fully recovered. They are all being treated at home. There are none currently in our hospitals. Of the 45,000 Queenslanders who have been asked to quarantine, 1,432 of them are in the Cairns region, and about 1,200 of those quarantine orders remain active. The fever clinic here in Cairns saw 34 people in the last 24 hours bringing their total to 632. Tragically, though, I can also confirm that Queensland has recorded its third death in Queensland and it's fourth Queensland death overnight. An 85-year-old male passed away in the Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service at the Toowoomba Hospital overnight. And of course, all of our condolences, the condolences of the whole of Queensland, go to that gentleman's family, which is, of course, grieving right now, and each of these deaths reminds us of just how important our effort to stop the spread of this outbreak, to slow the spread of this outbreak, is. The longer we can slow it, the better our hospitals will be able to cope with demand, the more lives our doctors and nurses and health staff will be able to save, and that is what is at stake here - Queensland lives. People in your community, your neighbourhood, maybe even your family, and so when we ask you to do things which are often inconvenient, sometimes are very inconvenient, sometimes very impactful on your work or your business, please know that we are taking this seriously because it is serious. This virus is deadly. Here at the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service, they've done a fantastic job of preparing for a potential outbreak of COVID-19. Last week, the Palaszczuk Government announced we were investing another \$1.2 billion into our health service and hospitals and we would expect Cairns and Hinterland Health Service's share of that to be roughly \$152 million. That will allow them to expand their fever clinics as required, to deliver more health services in the home and into aged care facilities to expand intensive care ward and emergency department capacity and, of course, do all of that while continuing to deliver the urgent and critical services that our health services have to continue to deliver. We can't stop delivering babies. Sadly, we can't stop people having heart attacks and strokes. We need to

make sure our hospitals can keep doing that urgent emergency work, while also dealing with what is a likely to be a large influx of COVID-19 patients. I'm looking forward to, today, with the Chief Health Officer, hearing and seeing firsthand just how those preparations are progressing, hearing if there is anything further that Queensland Health or the Government as a system can provide to make sure that the health services here are well-equipped to deal with COVID-19, but I think what all Cairns locals know is that they have a fantastic health service. They have fantastic hospitals, staffed with truly dedicated doctors and nurses, health professionals, support staff, and they are the heroes of this effort, to save lives from COVID-19.

CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER:

Well, as you just heard, Queensland has now had its fourth death due to this new coronavirus, so it is extremely important that everyone works together to minimise the transmission of the virus. So to do that, it is really important that if people are sick, for any cause whatsoever, they stay home. Then it's important that people minimise their time coming into contact with other people and try and make sure that they maintain that 1.5 metre distance wherever possible. Then it is important that people decrease the number of people they come into contact with, so if you come into contact with 100 people during the day, you've got 100 times the chance of getting infected with this coronavirus, and if you come into contact with one person during the course of your day. So that is why we're asking people, wherever possible, to stay in their own home, to work from home, to study from home, to go to school from home, wherever possible, so to only leave their home to go out, to buy essentials, to go out to have some exercise. And I can see around me here on the esplanade, there are a lot of people out exercising today singly or in pairs, and that's what we're asking of people. For people to, of course, continue going to work if they can't work from home, to continue going to education if they can't do that from home, or for children, if they're the children of essential workers. So they should continue going to school or during these...this break at the moment, to vacation care services. Then the fourth area is that people, if they need health care, must of course access health care. Our hospitals are fully open for business. If people have any of their normal health care issues, they should seek advice if they need to, or they should go to their local hospital and seek that care. And then we're also asking - you would have seen the announcement yesterday from the Premier - about the care packages that are available. So we're asking everyone to think if there are vulnerable people in their community, to support them so they don't have to go out and do shopping, work with them so that you assist them. I'd just like to remind everyone who the most vulnerable people are, to getting complications if they get infected. So those are people who are 65 years of age or older, who have chronic disease, specifically uncontrolled hypertension, uncontrolled diabetes, heart disease, lung disease, or chronic renal failure, so they're on dialysis. We know those groups are most at-risk. Then anyone who is aged 70 years or over. They're at risk. And any of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who live in Queensland who are over age 50, with one or more chronic diseases. They're more at risk. So this is what all of this is about. It's protecting those most vulnerable in our society and there is a lot of hardship, I know, for people to follow all of these guidelines, but it's really, really important that people do that, and that people maintain their connections, but maintain them in a different way. Thank you.

DON MACKIE:

Hello. Don Mackie, Executive Director of Medical Services. So I just want to talk a little bit about the work that we've been doing to prepare here in Cairns and Hinterland and this goes back to mid-January, when we started doing a lot of work with tropical Public Health Service, starting to contact trace and do that work with the community, and that has continued and we're putting more resources into that as we see more patients or more people identified with COVID and that greater work in contact tracing. So that's been going pretty well around the clock since then. At the end of January, we stood up a health emergency operations centre, that's for the whole of the health service, and it brings in our partners, including private hospitals, police, ambulance service, general practice, the PHN coming together and we're meeting daily just to review our plans and how we're going on. I want to assure people that we are really prepared here. We've got some very talented people who work here, some people with real expertise and experience in this sort of situation. And we'll be able to draw on their wisdom and knowledge to put in some really effective plans. We're ready. We've got the supplies we need. We've got the PPE currently to care for our staff, because they're our most precious resource, and we're assured of continued supplies. And finally, I'd just like to echo the Chief Health Officer's comments about what everyone in the community can do to reduce the peak of demand and take the pressure off health services.

MINISTER MILES:

Jeannette and I need to report to the Queensland Disaster Management Committee at 10 so what I might propose is that if there are any questions for Jeannette or I, we'll take those now. Any questions for Don and then Craig and Cynthia are here to provide comment from a local perspective as well.

REPORTER:

Minister, do you have any more information about this man that's died? Does his family also have COVID-19 or [inaudible]?

MINISTER MILES:

We're not in a position to provide any further comment at this stage, obviously this is a very sensitive matter. His family has only just learned that he has passed away. There may be further details as things progress.

REPORTER:

Is it time to isolate North Queensland?

MINISTER MILES:

We've already effectively isolated all of Queensland. We've closed the Queensland-New South Wales border. An unprecedented move that hasn't occurred since 1918. But further to that, further to that we have cancelled all non-essential travel within the state. So the only reasons that people should be leaving their home are for essential reasons. To get food for their family, for medical care, that kind of thing. Or if their work can't be done from home. So what that effectively means is that all of Queensland is currently restricted from travel. There's no reason why someone would need to do their groceries in Cairns if they live in the South East. And so...while I understand there's some folk around who are seeing an

opportunity for a stunt. That's not really appropriate here. The response to this has been very, very strong. As the Chief Health Officer said yesterday there's no need to create a new border when we've effectively put a border at the front door of every single house in Queensland.

REPORTER:

Would the State Government consider a regional zone model more similar to WA though?

MINISTER MILES:

Well again, under the model that has been chosen here – the home isolation...the home quarantine model, there's no reason why people would be travelling region to region unless it was essential and so that decision on Sunday really overtook any call for any regional restrictions because those restrictions put in place on Sunday are stronger than that, go further than that.

REPORTER:

Minister we've seen people go out of their way to make home made sanitizer. Often that's not effective given it's only 65 per cent alcohol. What would you say to those people?

MINISTER MILES:

Well there's no reason to be making home made sanitizer. While there might be places where it's difficult to get supply of sanitizer we know what is more effective than sanitizer is soap and water. Washing your hands properly with soap and water and there are no shortages of soap as I understand it. So I would encourage people to stock....to ensure they have sufficient supplied with soap, not be too concerned about steriliser.

REPORTER:

We've been told reports of several hospital workers falling ill to COVID-19. Can you confirm that and if so where are they?

MINISTER MILES:

Nobody...no Queensland health workers have contracted COVID-19 at work, from at their hospital. That's our understanding at this stage. I might ask the Chief Health Officer to confirm that.

CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER:

Yes, there have been some reports that in New South Wales and Victoria there have been some health care workers who it's thought probably contracted it at work. But it's in a situation where they weren't wearing any PPE. So we know that if a health care worker comes into interaction with any respiratory symptoms normally they do need to wear PPE. So at the moment we're reinforcing that with all of our health care workers. If they see anyone with any respiratory symptoms they must wear a surgical mask. And we have the stocks to enable us to absolutely support our health care workers to do that.

REPORTER:

Dr. Young, how encouraging is it to see that there aren't any patients here in the Far North in ICU?

CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER:

Unfortunately, we are going to end up seeing patients in the ICU here in Cairns Hospital. We know that will happen because we know there's a certain percentage of patients particularly those in the more vulnerable categories who will need ICU. We also know that we have a fantastic ICU unit here. I worked with them as long ago as during the pandemic for H1N1, the Swine Flu pandemic and they did a brilliant job. And a lot of the same staff are still here. I came up a few weeks ago and met them all so they have all of their systems in place so I know they'll manage those cases. I am of course very, very concerned about any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who end up getting infected because they will be at a higher risk of having complications. So we've got a system in place to move them out of their more isolated remote communities to the ICU here so that they will get the care that they need.

REPORTER:

How long do patients still test positive for? We're hearing some patients are still testing positive 14 days after isolation. Or after their 14 days isolation.

CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER:

Right so, a couple of things there. Are you talking about quarantine or isolation?

REPORTER:

Isolation.

CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER:

So quarantine...quarantine is well people. So isolation...so someone who has been at home that we've asked to isolate because they've been confirmed to have the infection. We know that you can have a lag period after you've recovered and you no longer have any symptoms you still can excrete some virus. Now, sometimes that will be dead virus and the tests that we use nowadays they're so sensitive they'll pick that up. But that means that the person can't spread it, they're not contagious. Sometimes they can continue to excrete very small amounts of live virus but the amounts are so small that again, they won't spread. So it's all about when people spread the virus and that's why it's critical that people who we think could get it go into quarantine because that's the riskiest time. So that's the period when they first start getting symptoms and they might not even recognise they're getting those symptoms. So that's why as a nation we made that decision to recommend to first ministers and they followed up on it that anyone coming into Australia from overseas go into quarantine in hotels to be very closely monitored because that's where the majority of our cases have come from in Australia.

REPORTER:

How long do the side-effects linger for?

CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER:



Side-effects of?

REPORTER:

The illness.

CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER:

Of the illness? It varies. It will vary on the age of the person. It will vary on the amount of load they had originally when they were exposed. There are a whole range of things. So that's why we're saying to people that they're not out of isolation until at least 72 hours after the very last symptom. And that period from when they got the first symptom to the very last symptom can vary anywhere from 7 days up to 3 weeks, ever longer. So we're not...unlike flu people would have seen that with flu that we always use to have a set period that we said. We're not here because this is a very new virus till. We've only really known about it since the end of December last year and we're learning more and more every single day. Which is why our advice is changing every single day. For instance the vulnerable worker advice, the vulnerable person advice we originally said was age 60 but now that we've got information out of the UK, France, Italy, rest of Europe and the United States we know that for our population here in Australia 65 is more relevant. Although for the Chinese, 60 was their age. But then of course we have our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and we use a different age for them. So all of these things are evolving and we're using the latest information. I meet with my colleagues every single day for two hours to go through all of that information to make sure that we have the best information possible to advise our first ministers and the Prime Minister to take on board.

REPORTER:

Remote indigenous communities are particularly vulnerable to this virus. What is the plan if this virus does get into those communities up in the Cape and the Torres Strait?

CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER:

So we've done a lot of work with the remote Mayors, so I've met with them regularly. And our Chief Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Officer Haylene Grogan meets every single day so that they get information. So they've all put in place processes that they quarantine people effectively in their community. Then if anyone is confirmed as being a positive case there are arrangements to move them out of their community to an area that they can have a higher level of care. We currently have four planes on standby, additional to the normal cohort that we use in Queensland so that we can rapidly move people if they become positive.

REPORTER:

Do we have community transmission here in Cairns?

CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER:

We've got very early signs of a limited amount of community transmission related to one cluster. And I'm very confident that Cairns will get on top of that and manage that. We had some early community transmission down at the Gold Coast with a number of clusters there.

That's all been sorted and solved and there's no ongoing community transmission, and that was related to the very first cases down there that were related to Wuhan, then we had that movie group – if I call them that – there was some clusters going on there with some transmission, and that all got managed. And there were some others and you may have heard of those. So here in Cairns, yes, there is one cluster – very early signs that there might be some community transmission, but there is a magnificent team that's working to sort all that through. This is their job, they're extremely good at it, and they're getting enormous support from members of the community. So they'll be working out who's at risk from that cluster and asking them to go into quarantine.

REPORTER:

Dr Young, the Gold Coast Mayor Tom Tate said yesterday sunbaking on beaches is okay after you said it wasn't, what's the rule?

CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER:

It is okay for people to go out and exercise. It might be the difference between understanding what exercise is. I don't feel that sunbaking on a beach is exercise. Of course, if you're just having a rest there after you've had a run and you've gone to the beach or you've walked to the beach and you're sitting down, then that of course is fine, but I wouldn't have thought that someone lying on the beach for a couple of hours meets that definition of exercise. But I do agree this is extremely complicated. I'm just asking people to use common sense, and Queenslanders are actually extremely good at that. We see that every single summer with the numbers of cyclones and floods and people respond perfectly, and up here in Cairns you've had so much practice at that. So I have no concerns that people will not use common sense. So there's those four reasons for people to leave their home, and one of those four is exercise. But it's about essential exercise, and as I said before, looking around here I can see people taking advantage of this beautiful day, I mean it's a spectacular day. They're out in pairs, they're out singularly and they're out having a walk – that's what the aim is, we don't have large numbers of people congregating. And that's the risk – I mean it wouldn't worry me if one person goes out and sunbakes on the beach, that doesn't matter, but if you had a whole lot of people just staying there and accumulating, that's the problem.

REPORTER:

There's a group of doctors in Townsville who do want to isolate the north, are you disappointed they're going against the advice that you're giving?

CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER:

No, that was very sensible advice that they gave. I agreed with them. But we've actually taken that on board and we've gone further than they were saying. So I'm sure, now that they're aware of what is happening, they'll be fine with it. That's very sensible advice. Queensland is a very, very big state, and right from the word go I've always said that we might be doing things differently in Queensland because it is so big. So that there might be parts of the state that don't have any of the cases related to this pandemic, and so we're doing some very specific work as you've heard with our remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Now we do have cases up in north Queensland, but they're limited,

they're being managed, so it's really important that people south of the state don't come up. But it's actually even more important than that that people from Melbourne and Sydney, who've got significant community transmission, that they don't come to north Queensland. They are a far bigger risk than people from the southern part of Queensland. Despite that, we've managed the risk from other parts of Queensland moving into different parts, that's happened, and also, we've managed the risk for people moving into Queensland from outside Queensland whether that be domestic travel or international travel.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible] why can't we get a better breakdown of where these cases are in regions like Cairns and Hinterland?

CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER:

Yep. You're ahead of us again. Yes, we're doing all of that work to get that information out so that people know exactly, down to a local level, where these cases are. We're just working through at the moment about is it where the cases are being isolated, and I probably think that is where it needs to be so that people know where those cases are rather than where the person normally lives. Because where the person normally lives, if they're not there at the moment, they're somewhere else, say those remote Indigenous communities, it's more important that people know where they are. So yes, we're getting that information out there so that every Queenslander can see where they are. The Commonwealth has already put out heat maps so that you can go and look on the Commonwealth website for heatmaps of where the cases are in Australia, and that's helping me decide where the risks are in terms of people moving from other parts of the country to Queensland.

REPORTER:

I just need to ask, I mean, what extra precautions should people over 65 be doing to sort of make sure they get their flu vaccination?

CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER:

Right. As I said, one of the reasons you can leave your own home is to get medical care and getting a flu vaccine is medical care and it's more important than ever that people do that. Thank you very much.

[ENDS]



Program: Press Conference

Interviewee: Health Minister Steven Miles, Mackay MP Julieanne Gilbert,
Chief Health Officer Dr Jeanette Young

Date: 3 April 2020

Duration: 26 minutes 30 seconds

E&OE

MINISTER MILES:

As you might have heard we've confirmed that overnight there were 39 additional cases of COVID-19 confirmed in Queensland bringing our total to 873. Eight of those are currently in intensive care in hospitals in Queensland we have now done more than 50,000 tests for COVID-19. We have tested 51,108 people. Of those new cases one of them is in the Mackay HHS region bringing a total number diagnosed so far 12. Nine are considered active and three are currently in hospital. Of the 863 quarantine notices issued here in the Mackay HHS region, 480 of those are currently active. That is 480 people keeping us safe by quarantining themselves at home and of course we thank all those Queenslanders who have done that to keep themselves, their family and the rest of the community safe. Today, we are confirming that Mackay's share of the \$1.2 billion-dollar health investment to deal with COVID-19 is \$70 million dollars. We would expect Mackay to have access to up to \$70 million dollars to allow them to address those extra COVID-19 patients, to expand their fever clinics, to put more paramedics on the road, to expand intensive care, ward and emergency department capacity so that they can well treat COVID-19 patients as well as continue to deal with all of the work our hospitals do on a day to day basis. People are going to keep having babies, sadly people will continue to have heart attacks and strokes and we need to make sure all health services are well so that a hard-working doctors and nurses, health professionals and their support staff can continue to do all of that very important work. The Chief Health Officer and I, Dr Jeanette Young and I, are here today to hear from the health service about their preparations. I already know that they are very, very well prepared and that if and when we experience a wider outbreak of COVID-19 here in the Mackay region, the Mackay HHS will deliver fantastic services. We are blessed in Queensland with one of the world's best health systems. I say the world's best, of course I do believe that, but one of the world's best health system and our fantastic doctors and nurses and health professionals and all of their support staff will do, as they always have done, deliver world-class care. I want to say something, though, about how some of them have been treated when they are out in the community. I have heard first-hand from nurses and midwives and other health staff that out in the Mackay community, they have been vilified, they have been threatened, they have been treated abhorrently, and I want to call on every Queenslander – if you see someone out and about in a Queensland Health uniform, they are our heroes. They go to work every day to take care of us, so thank them. Don't yell at them, thank them. I think that is incredibly, incredibly important. We are going to need every single one of our health staff to not just be well and be at work, but we need them to feel supported, and we have all got a role to play to make them

feel supported. I am going to ask Julieanne to say something about the health service and then Jeanette Young to talk about our work today and of course, we are happy to take questions.

JULIEANNE GILBERT:

Good morning everyone. I'd like to send a thankyou out to all of our health professionals. We've just met with many of them here in the hospital and their representatives and they are doing a great job. They are working through elective surgeries. They are getting ready and preparing everything that we need to have in our health system here if we do get more cases. I'd like to send out a great thankyou to them because they are working day and night making sure that they are looking after our whole community. Make sure that when you see them out in the community that you say thankyou for the work that they are doing. Because without them we would be stuffed. They are following all of the procedures that they need to follow here. They are not at risk of contracting the disease. They are making sure that they are fit and well to make sure that they can look after you if you contract the disease. It's really important that we look after everybody in our community. Yesterday I spent two minutes online and I registered for the Queensland Government Care Army. This is an opportunity for you to be part of our community in a practical way whether it's being connecting with our elderly to help them with shopping, collecting medicines or just a friendly phone call. At this point in time we need to make sure that as a community we are caring for everyone. This virus is time limited but at the end of this virus we need to be a stronger community than when we started. So please, go online, connect up with the Care Army. Register, it's very easy and put something back and alleviate some of the stress that may be out there and you can become a really vital member to say at the end of it "I did my part". Any questions? Nope, I've off to Meals on Wheels. They're waiting for their lunch.

DR YOUNG:

That's excellent to hear. It is really, really important that at times like this we support each other as much as we possibly can. And in Queensland we're always extremely good at it. And in the North I think you're even better because every single year you deal with cyclones coming through. You deal with incidents that need the community to get together so you're in a great place to respond here. We know that the most important thing that everyone can do to keep as many people safe as possible, is if you're sick stay home. That is just so critical and at this time if you have any symptoms of any disease, please stay at home. Ring up 13 HEALTH or your local GP for advice if you don't know what to do. Most people of course with chronic disease have chronic disease plans and know what to do if they become unwell. If you don't, please ring and seek advice. Your hospital is fantastically prepared. This Hospital and Health Service has been planning right from the word go and they have those plans in place. And I've been speaking to your Chief Executive about them. You will be provided care to every single member of the community that needs it. There's no doubt about that at all. You've got such enormously well-prepared health service that will be able to respond no matter what happens as we go forward in the next six months or so. So that's critical. So first, if you're unwell please stay at home, that's really important. If you're one of the vulnerable group – that is, if you're aged 65 or over with one or more chronic diseases, or you're aged 70 or over without or with chronic diseases, or if you're an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander aged 50 or over with a chronic disease then you are more vulnerable. So we

heard about the Care Army that's been put in place. It's up to us, all in the community, to support those vulnerable people so that they can remain protected in their own home and don't need to go out for any reason other than to access healthcare. That's really important. Then for the rest of us there are some pretty straight forward things we can do to protect ourselves. The first one is to always do your best to maintain a 1.5 metre distance from other people. As you all are here today. Then to minimise the number of people you come into contact with. So if you come into contact with 100 people in a day you've got 100 times the chance of getting infected with this coronavirus than if you come into contact with one person in a day. So try and minimise the number of people you come into contact with. That's not always possible but think of ways to do that. Minimise the number of times you go out for things that aren't absolutely essential. So perhaps, think about shopping once a week rather than shopping once a day. Things like that. They're all things that add up and make a difference. And if we do all of those things we know that we will slow the spread of the virus and that means we will be able to provide the care that every single person needs.

REPORTER:

Just on healthcare workers. How many in our State's hospitals have contracted COVID-19 so far?

DR YOUNG:

We've had a number of healthcare workers contract the novel coronavirus, but it's been as part of the community. So, our healthcare workers are no less vulnerable to contracting this virus than any other member of the community because no one has immunity to it. That's why this virus is such a concern.

REPORTER:

Jeanette, how much modelling has been done for Mackay in relation to cases?

DR YOUNG:

We've looked at all of that, and we've looked at the differences, because Mackay has got a higher proportion, of course, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and we know that they're at higher risk of getting complications. But we also need to remember that we have so many advantages in this state in combatting the impact of the coronavirus. We're such a disperse, spread out state, that's often a disadvantage, but in this case it is very, very much an advantage, which means that we won't see the peak of the impact of this virus across the whole state at the same time. So we'll be able to provide support within the state, wherever its needed. And we've also put in place four additional jets that we have on stand-by so we can move people rapidly around the state to assist with that.

REPORTER:

So, when is Mackay's peak expected?

DR YOUNG:

We don't know that, the reason we don't know is it depends how effective our social isolation strategies are. We didn't... when we initially did some modelling, we didn't expect

the Commonwealth Government to close our borders to all international travel, other than Queenslanders, or Australians, returning home. And then similarly, we didn't expect our State Government to close its borders, so this morning 16 non-Queenslanders were turned away from our domestic borders to return home. That came into place last night at midnight, so we've really minimised the travel into our state from either overseas or from other states. And we know at the moment in Queensland, we've got some very, very limited transmission, but it is minimal, when we look at what's going on in Sydney, and in Melbourne where it's reasonably significant, we don't have that here. Now if we continue that, and with all of our strategies in place, we believe we will, that will significantly delay the pandemic spreading through Queensland, and when the peak happens.

REPORTER:

With the modelling that you've [inaudible] does that take into account the tens of thousands of mine workers that are out west? Will they be taken to Mackay to be treated or taken to the south east?

DR YOUNG:

It depends, that's why we've got those four planes on stand-by, because they're jets, so often it is just as easy to move someone from one place in the state to Brisbane, or up to Townsville, or Cairns, or wherever there aren't cases rather than to bring them into Mackay. So, all of that is part of our planning and is in place.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] have ventilators, are you going to be looking at maybe getting some more ICU ventilators in Mackay, so we are prepared for this?

DR YOUNG:

Yes, Mackay has already done that work to surge up their ventilator capacity, their ICU capacity and their workforce capacity, so all that work has been done very, very effectively here in Mackay already.

REPORTER:

The Premier said on radio this morning that peak cases are expected in July or August, will make that us collide with the flu season?

DR YOUNG:

Yes, if that's when the peak happens, that will occur. But, that's why we're asking everyone to go out and get vaccinated against the flu this year, and we have additional stocks of flu vaccines so that can happen. It is really important that we don't want an outbreak of flu at the same time as we have an outbreak of COVID-19. Because we know that the risks for an individual, if they have both infections, they're not going to recover as well, so that's already in place.

REPORTER:

In terms of the [inaudible] and it could be as late as September, the Premier said, what overflow hospitals [inaudible]?

DR YOUNG:

Yes, so we've been doing that work across the state to look at how we can use additional capacity. So the Prime Minister announced that the states will now be working with the private sector, and they're part of our system. So we've immediately doubled our capacity. So we believe that we won't need any such thing as field hospitals, but we of course have that planning in place in case its needed. I really think it won't be needed, but the planning is there. And we've used them before, we've regularly used field hospitals in this state when we've had cyclones and floods, when we've had hospitals cut off from other parts of a town so that we've put a... you know we've had a river running through and not being able to cross, so we've put a field hospital on one side with the normal hospital on the other. So we've done that and we have a lot of experience if its needed. I suspect it won't be needed, but the planning is being done.

REPORTER:

With the confirmed case in the Mackay base Hospital Health Service [inaudible] are you able to indication where about this new person is?

DR YOUNG:

We've currently got two people admitted here in this hospital, and one in Proserpine, and we're actually working at the moment to get more data so that we can put it out and let people know exactly where all the cases are being treated, because that is important information.

REPORTER:

So two people here and one in Proserpine, does that mean there's only three in the Mackay region that currently still have the virus?

DR YOUNG:

That are in hospital, yes.

REPORTER:

And just a confirmation about that first question I asked about health care workers, does that figure include the Children's Hospital, or is that a separate health service?

DR YOUNG:

The Children's Hospital is a separate hospital and health service in its own right, yes.

REPORTER:

Are there any workers in the Children's Hospital that have COVID-19?

DR YOUNG:

I am not aware specifically, but as I've said, we do have a number of health workers across the state that have contracted this virus, and then we've had to go and work with those facilities to see who've they've had contact with and manage that.

REPORTER:

And you're confident none of them have caught it in the way they're doing their job?

DR YOUNG:

We believe not. No.

REPORTER:

What are the conditions of the three people that are still in hospital in this region?

DR YOUNG:

None of them are in intensive care.

REPORTER:

I've got a question for [inaudible]. Cruise ships are being turned away from Sydney, but are they going to be allowed to dock at Gladstone at all?

DR YOUNG:

Not at this point, that's work that we're doing at a national level, so we're very, very concerned about cruise ships. And unfortunately, here in Queensland, three of our deaths have been related to cruise ships, so we're very concerned about them and we're very carefully at a national level. So there are a number of cruise ships currently off the coast of Sydney, and off the coast in Western Australia, and we're aware of those and we're working with our colleagues interstate about any Queenslanders who are on those ships.

REPORTER:

I think there are also cruise ships that are down around the coast of Gladstone, so that's not going to be able to dock at all?

DR YOUNG:

Not at this point, there is no plan at this point. We'll just work, we're continuing to work with all of the cruise ships that are currently in Australian waters.

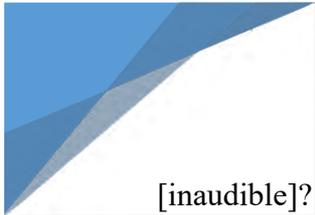
REPORTER:

If it were to dock, would regional hospitals be able to cater to the sick crew or passengers [inaudible]?

DR YOUNG:

That would be part of the planning for where they would come into dock, so that we would make sure that we can manage all that.

REPORTER:



[inaudible]?

DR YOUNG:

It's too early to say. We're not even at the start of it really, in Queensland. We're just getting these small numbers each day. You would've seen today we had 39 cases, a few more yesterday, it's been up and down. So, we're really containing it in Queensland at this stage, and that's our aim: to contain it for as long as we possibly can. But eventually we won't be able to contain it and then we'll start to see that increase.

REPORTER:

There are cluster spots down in the south east, Toowoomba, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and obviously Brisbane. There has been talk of north Queensland based politicians and MPs talking about quarantining the region [inaudible]?

DR YOUNG:

We've actually already done it, because we've really put a border in front of every single person's front door. So today in Queensland, people should not be leaving their homes unless they're going for four specific reasons: One, to buy essential supplies – food and so forth; secondly to access health care or to provide care to a vulnerable person; then thirdly, for exercise, it's really important that people continue to go out and exercise, and they should do that in their own family group or perhaps with one other person, that's very important; and then last, for those people who can't work from home, then they need to go to work, or of course for those people who can't be educated at home, whether that be school or university or other education, then they should go to their place that they access education. But otherwise there are few other areas that people should leave their home for, if there are court mandated orders, those sorts of things, but otherwise people should not be leaving their home and they definitely shouldn't be leaving their home to move to another part of the state, unless they're doing that for work or for really significant reasons. So essentially that is already in place, people definitely shouldn't be coming up to north Queensland now for a holiday. Save that up and do it as soon as we're through this.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] reports of backpackers coming up to the Whitsundays as early as the start of this week to check into hostels, it's clear that people aren't following that message and I guess, also that the mining minister cut off interstate FIFOs because he wanted to cut off possible transmission route, why not cut off all more possible transmission routes?

DR YOUNG:

So that is all happening, and the police are doing a magnificent job managing it. As I said earlier this morning, very early they'd already turned 16 people away at the border, so that is happening at our international borders and our domestic borders. So that's in place.

REPORTER:

So how are they stopping people from entering region to region if it's not for essential travel? How is that being policed?



DR YOUNG:

That is being managed by the police and they're looking at that and there is actually a complaints line. If people are aware of things happening, they should make sure that they let the police know through that complaints line.

REPORTER:

And what can they do if someone has already come up, because if there's no border, what legal right do they have to kick them out?

DR YOUNG:

They can fine them, significantly, and they can ask them to leave, they have those powers.

[ENDS]

Released under RTI - DPS



Format: Press conference

Topic: Coronavirus pandemic update

Speaker/s: Queensland Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk
Queensland Health Minister Steven Miles
Queensland Chief Health Officer Dr Jeannette Young
Police Commissioner Katarina Carroll

Broadcast: Live stream via [Periscope](#)

Date: 6 April 2020

Duration: 23:18 minutes

E&OE

PREMIER:

...very encouraging early signs, so everyone, keep up your social distancing, and make sure this weekend, you are staying in your region and staying in your suburb. Today, I want to announce that we will be putting into place a \$17.5 million plan to protect our health heroes. So Minister Miles will talk more about that, but we raised it yesterday that we were looking at securing some hotels, especially for our workers that are going to be doing those long shifts and may not be able to go home to their loved ones because there may be a member of their family that is vulnerable. So I'll get Minister Miles to talk more about that.

Can I absolutely endorse Mayor Tom Tate's call today to close three beaches – that being The Spit, Surfer's Paradise and Coolangatta. He discussed this with me and I 100 percent endorse that. We have been giving warnings now for a long time to people, and unfortunately they are not adhering by the social distancing. If we are really going to suppress this virus, we have to be making sure we are and we need to make sure that we are doing everything we possibly can to limit the spread. And the way that you limit that spread is by social distancing, and not having mass movement of people on our beaches. So I endorse that.

I also had a call this morning from the chair of the RNA, David Thomas. And of course, it was with great sadness that he reported that the EKKKA would not be going ahead. I know my little niece burst into tears when she heard that. Can I say to all the children out there and the mums and dads that the EKKKA will be back next year, fingers crossed, bigger and better than before. And I know it's going to be really hard for a lot of families who look forward to it every year. But we are in a crisis situation at the moment, so we need to make sure that we are looking after everybody and stopping the spread. In relation to our Care Army, we've had 18,000 people already register. Well done Queensland. We're going to be helping a lot of vulnerable members of our community, and I know that more and more people are going to sign up. So, with those few words, I might hand over to Doctor Miles. And sorry, it was remiss of me, I should have said at the very beginning that we extend our condolences to the

family of a gentleman who passed away yesterday. Once again, there's a family out there that are grieving, and we know that this COVID-19 has a significant impact, especially on our elderly and most vulnerable in our community. And it's a very sad day for the family. So I'll hand over to Minister Miles.

MINISTER MILES:

Thanks so much, Premier. That 14 positive figure overnight is another great result for Queensland, and underlines how effective we are all being together at keeping our distance and keeping ourselves and our communities safe. Of those 921 confirmed cases so far, we consider 743 of those to be active, meaning that 173 are confirmed to have recovered. 43 remain in hospital. Of those, 12 are in intensive care and 10 are ventilated. It was tragic to hear the news that we lost another Queenslanders to COVID-19 yesterday afternoon. Of the five Queenslanders who have died from this disease, four have come from cruise ships, as did the 78-year-old gentleman. But the positive figures and the ongoing reduction in the average number of positive figures demonstrates just how what we are doing is working. We are slowing the spread, and all Queenslanders need to keep it up. This extra death reminds us, reminds us that what we are doing is to save lives, to save the lives of other Queenslanders.

All along, we've said that this Government would plan for all eventualities, and you've heard us talk before about planning for various spread scenarios. We are also planning to take care of our health workers throughout this outbreak – not just with a plan A, but also with a plan B and a plan C, if they should need one. And that's what this investment in possible alternative accommodation for them is all about. It's sending a message to our health workers that no matter what, we have their back. That they are, and taking care of them and keeping them healthy, is our number one priority. And so, if they need it, we will invest in accommodation for them, accommodation close to their workplace. I want to underline that this is not for health employees who become sick, we have long had a program which provided accommodation to any Queenslanders who became sick and did not have appropriate accommodation, and that program has always been available to Queensland Health staff, should they need it, this is for Queensland Health staff who are well, who are working hard, who are there... may need to be quarantined or may still be able to work, but for whatever reason, their household circumstance means that they don't feel safe to be going home, or quarantining at home. They might have a child with an immune disorder, they might have an elderly parent with them and all of those things can be taken into account. This government, since the day we were first elected said that we would put health and our health workers and our frontline health staff, first. And we are doing that again today with this \$17.5 million investment.

DR YOUNG:

Thank you Minister. So over the last few days we've seen a significant reduction in the number of cases here in Queensland of COVID-19, which is excellent news. It means that our strategies that have been put in place are working and thank you to every single Queenslanders who has been adhering to them. It is not easy, I am absolutely convinced of that, that people have heard the message. Now we have seen out of those cases, 32 cases that we don't know where the person actually acquired it. So it wasn't from someone who had been overseas, it wasn't from a confirmed case, so therefor today I am going to be asking health care workers

to increase the people they are testing, even if they don't have any travel history. And I've asked for that to be done in the Gold Coast, in Brisbane and in Cairns, because that's where we've seen those cases. So, it doesn't make any difference to anyone who is out there, but it just means that when people present to their GP, or present to a fever clinic, that they'll also be tested for COVID-19 if they have any respiratory symptoms. So that's cough, sore throat, or shortness of breath, so we'll be doing that additional testing to just get a picture of whether we think there is any community spread happening through one of our communities. So those places are Gold Coast, Brisbane and Cairns.

REPORTER:

Do you say that those 32 are community transmission cases because you can't identify where they came from?

DR YOUNG:

Yes, we're not sure where those 32 people actually acquired the infection. Sometimes it is just that we haven't been able to, through talking with them, work out the contact they've had. Other times it is because we just haven't been able to work through it, so we just don't know. So it is a small number, particularly compared to what we've seen happening in New South Wales and Victoria, but it is enough that I'd like to do a little bit more testing, and we're very, very fortunate in Queensland that we do have the capacity to be able to do that. We're testing large numbers of Queenslanders already and we have the capacity to increase that testing.

REPORTER:

Of those 32 cases, are most of those in the south east, like the Gold Coast and Brisbane?

DR YOUNG:

No, they're spread across those three areas, through Cairns, Brisbane and the Gold Coast. We are not seeing the same numbers outside of those three areas, so at this stage I don't think we need to increase the testing outside those areas. But of course, clinicians can always test if they've got any concern and I have already asked, right from the start, that anyone who presents to a hospital with pneumonia, that they don't know the cause of that pneumonia they should automatically be tested.

REPORTER:

Dr Young, those 32 people who didn't come back from overseas, or have not had direct contact with someone?

DR YOUNG:

That's true. So, we have in addition to those 32 another 12 who we believe have contracted the disease interstate, which is why we have those controls at our border. So these 32, we just haven't been able to track down where they've got it. They're a very, very small component of the total number, but they're important and that is why we're going to do that increased testing.

REPORTER: When do we increase of the state more broadly across the rest? Because as we've been see, the cases we've been mainly testing are those coming back from overseas. Those numbers are dwindling. So when do we broaden the testing and get more of an idea of the community transmission? Not just in those three areas but across the state?

DR YOUNG:

Well, those three areas are actually quite large population centres for the state, so we will be doing a lot of extra testing there. Plus, we also know that some of the private pathology sector is also doing enhanced testing, because they've found it's easier to add it in as an extra test rather than separate it out. So we're doing a lot of additional surveillance, and this is just the next step along that pathway. Once we do see increased transmission in those other areas outside - Gold Coast, Brisbane and Cairns, we'll increase the testing there as well.

REPORTER:

What do we know about any other cluster, like the Noosa cluster and the one in Edmonton?

DR YOUNG:

At the moment, we have a couple of clusters going on in Cairns, but they're getting on top of them. And we have a few clusters elsewhere. But at this stage, due to the enormous capacity that's now been put in place for contact tracing, we're getting on top of the clusters.

REPORTER:

Can you see the numbers increase because of expanded testing?

DR YOUNG:

I don't think so, because I think we're well aware of where we've got cases. I think this is pre-emptive ahead of any local transmission, so I don't see a big increase in numbers at all because of increased testing.

COMMISSIONER CARROLL:

Thank you, I thought that I'd give you some figures from the last week or so and then I'll take some questions, thank you. In the last week, police have issued 139 penalty infringement notices. 19 of these were for a disappointing event on Saturday night - a car rally taking place in the Rochdale area, and others were around non-essential travel, blatantly disregarding quarantine rules. Also, lack of social distancing in our parks, and I expect that this will pick up in the next few weeks, and probably even on the weekend. Disappointingly, although we have given a lot of messaging around this, people are still disregarding and blatantly disregarding the rules. So, it's very simple - maintain social distancing. Please, non-essential travel - you shouldn't be... I think that the Premier uses the terminology - travelling outside your village. And you would also know that the Gold Coast Council has shut a number of its beaches. This will be heavily patrolled this weekend, but not only those beaches. All of the beaches as we go into Easter weekend. The other couple of numbers that I will give you is that since we put in those tighter border controls this past few days since last Friday, we've intercepted 23,000 vehicles, and as a result, we have turned away 532 vehicles. If you are not a Queensland resident, you shouldn't be coming into Queensland unless you have an

exemption, and that, literally is the border pass. And obviously, the freight and transport industry are exempt as well. And we have received 444 complaints in relation to non-compliance so far. I'll leave it at that and open up for questions.

REPORTER:

You say blatant disregard, is that just sheer ignorance or people just don't care?

COMMISSIONER CARROLL:

I think in some instances, definitely, don't care. The car rally is an example of that. People congregating when they clearly should not be congregating. I think that the message is very clear - you shouldn't be in your car unless it's for essential travel. That is very clear. And that's what happened on this occasion. So we have intercepted vehicles, and obviously, motorcycles that were just going for a drive or a ride. You shouldn't be doing this in the current circumstances.

REPORTER:

Commissioner, did you have any noisy parties this weekend?

COMMISSIONER CARROLL:

Very little in the way of noisy parties, in fact. That's where I say, compliance has been very good by the majority of the public. It has been excellent. But this very few put many at risk.

REPORTER:

Coming up to the Easter holiday this week and we know that there are people who are thinking that they might go to their holiday homes or that sort of thing. Should they not be going? Should they be staying at their usual residence?

COMMISSIONER CARROLL:

So what would be optimum, and I might get the Chief Medical Officer to comment on this, is that people actually do stay in their principle residence. And stay in their village - exercise in their village, and only travel from their home for essential reasons. That's the practicality and that's what we should be doing. What we were finding on the weekend is people travelling from Brisbane to go to the Gold Coast beaches to exercise or have a swim. You should be doing this in your local area.

REPORTER:

Can you fine people for that? Can you fine people for going to their holiday homes when the Chief Medical Officer directions?

COMMISSIONER CARROLL:

Technically, if it is non-essential travel, it's not complying. So there are nuances, obviously, but it's the non-essential, you shouldn't be on the road. If you're not going to an essential service, you should be in your home.

REPORTER:

So if you can just going up the coast to stay in the holiday home that you might own or whatever, that's classed as non-essential travel?

COMMISSIONER CARROLL:

On the weekend, we have fined people for blatantly just being out and about for going for a ride or a drive. Which was clearly non-essential travel. And I think that we have been patient. We have communicated with people. We have been very, very compassionate. But time and time again, even when we pull people over and explain this to them, and it's happened again and again, unfortunately it has for those people. They've been given an enforcement notice. We've seen people blatantly drive around our barricades. So now we are putting out concrete barricades to make sure that people can't drive on footpaths and get around them. So can I please ask - as we go into what is normal an incredibly busy weekend, that we really listen to the rules and comply with them. Because it has had an extraordinarily positive impact so far.

REPORTER:

Do you think that all beaches need to close? Do you think that all beaches need to close? Or we'll get to that point?

COMMISSIONER CARROLL:

I think if people are doing the right thing... It's fine. And you will see on Saturday with the markets, we had a lot of issues with the markets on Saturday. However, on Sunday, they were a lot more compliant. And I think that when people do the right thing, they are compliant, there's no reason to close things down.

REPORTER:

Tom Tate says that the beaches will still be open for locals to go and exercise and go for a walk. But how do you monitor that, then?

COMMISSIONER CARROLL:

That's very easy to monitor. If you've got people living on the beach in the units that would be a form of ID, or you know, so that's very easy to monitor. And in fact, it should only be for those people who are in that local area to enjoy the local beaches and use it as exercise.

REPORTER:

Licence checks?

COMMISSIONER CARROLL:

Licence checks, student IDs. There's always very quick way that is you can actually check this.

REPORTER:

You talk about 532 cars being turned around at the border. What about at the airports? Has anybody been kept at the airport and had to book a flight back interstate?

COMMISSIONER CARROLL:

Yes, there definitely has been. I can get those figures to you. But the same has taken place at the airport. So people have been turned around and told to go home if they don't comply with our restrictions at the moment.

REPORTER:

Premier, there's talk interstate in New South Wales and Victoria, of perhaps getting all Year 12 students to do Year 13, if you like, and repeating? Is any consideration of that?

PREMIER:

No decision has been made yet, but I know that the National Cabinet will be considering it, I think, later on this week. So I don't want to pre-empt any discussions there.

REPORTER:

It's a huge drain on the educational system presumably?

PREMIER:

Well, it is an unusual year that we're facing. So, I just ask parents and students to be very patient during this time. We're trying to cover off a whole lot of issue, and of course, the most pressing issues to hand are, of course, what's happening coming up to this weekend. And if I could just reiterate that people should be staying in their region and staying in their village. Now is not the time to be a tourist. Now is not the time to hop in the car and go to the beach. The time for going to the beach will be once we get through this because we want people to stay in their suburbs. It's going to be much easier for us to identify community transmission into the future, and what we don't want to see is people moving, mass movements of people to other parts of our state. So very clearly everyone - everyone is doing a great job. 90 per cent of the people in their state are doing a great job. We now want to make it 100 per cent. And from what I can see, people are out walking in their local communities, which is wonderful. But it's not the time to pack up and take your family to the beach for a holiday. There is no holiday this year. Enjoy the time, spend it with your family at home. Have a lovely Easter break at home. How many times do we not have enough time to spend with our family during these times? We're always leading such busy lives. It's actually a nice opportunity to be with loved ones during this time.

REPORTER:

Premier, what is the Princess cruise ship doing on the other side of Stradbroke? Apparently an army helicopter has been out to it twice today. Are there sick people on board?

PREMIER:

I don't know about that Josh. But I can say that there are a number of cruise ships off our coast at the moment. Those cruise ships do not have tourists on board. They have crews on board. And the Queensland Government is, of course, endorsing Border Force's direction for all of them to move off the coast.

REPORTER:

Even if there are people who are unwell on board? Would you take them in?

PREMIER:

I don't know of any reports of people being unwell. So I'm not going to pre-empt that.

REPORTER:

But if anybody was?

PREMIER:

I'm happy to look into it. But let me make it very clear that our Government backs Border Force asking all of the vessels to remove themselves from waters off the coast of Queensland.

REPORTER:

Dr Young, can I ask a question about supermarkets and etiquette? Is it safe for people, as I saw on the weekend, to be going along picking up products from the shelves and putting them back, not necessarily in their trolleys? Handling food is what I'm saying.

DR YOUNG:

The best thing, of course, would be if people think about what we want to buy before they go and touch. And that's actually good practice at all times. Once people have touched something, whether it be a kilogram of flour or something, you know ice-cream in the freezer, the risk is very, very, very low. But it's good practice. It's good hygiene, normally, and I'd encourage that people just think before they go and touch something.

REPORTER:

Is Parliament going to sit next week?

PREMIER:

It depends when we finalise commercial leases Alison. So at the moment, National Cabinet will be considering that I understand tomorrow. And if we can finalise the legislation in time, the Omnibus Bill will come in next week. So it is matter of weeks - next week or the week after.

REPORTER:

The decisions last week that public servant pay rises should be frozen. Have you got any concern about the front-line workers in hospitals and the like who will be affected by that?

PREMIER:

No, I don't, because I made it very clear that they are frozen. But let me also make it very clear that the state is going to have to find a lot of money to pay for workers that will be working double shifts into the future. So, every single dollar counts here. Every single dollar is going to count. This is going to run for months. You only have to look at what's happening overseas, so I need to make sure that every single dollar counts. Last one.

REPORTER:

So nurses on the front-line won't be exempt then who haven't signed on to the agreement?



PREMIER:

I've frozen it from the other day so from the date of the freeze is when it's frozen.

REPORTER:

Last week, you said Minister Farmer would be giving you an update at Cabinet about domestic violence issues?

PREMIER:

She'll be coming to speak to you this week. So we'll be talking a lot more extensively about the impacts of domestic and family violence, especially in homes at this particular point in time. So there will be a range of measures that we'll be announcing, so I think she's coming in the next couple of days to talk to you all. Okay, thank you very much everyone. Thanks for your time.

[ENDS]

Released under RTI - BPC

Program: Press Conference

Speakers: Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk; Minister Mark Bailey;
Minister Steven Miles and Dr Jeanette Young

Date: 7 April 2020

Duration: 11 minutes

E&OE

PREMIER

... We don't want people to rest and think it's OK to socialise. We need everyone to please do the right thing. And I know we can do it if we all work together. And some great achievements that we've seen over the last three to four days. I want to talk briefly about the cruise ships. So everybody would be aware that there have been a number of cruise ships off our coast, about nine, and I really want to thank the cooperation between the Federal Government and the state in terms of the direction by Border Force for these cruise ships to exit Queensland by tomorrow, one minute before midnight. And we had nine off the coast and five have now left and there are four remaining, but they are just refuelling and they'll be on their way as well. Dr Young will address our issues about cases that have come from cruise ship passengers from the southern states, that being around 119. But she'll give some further information about that. So, if you do see a cruise ship at a port today or tomorrow, that is... They are just refuelling and then they will be on their way, so some great cooperation, once again, between the federal and the state governments to ensure that this is happening. So I might hand over to Minister Bailey, who is going to talk a little bit more about the processes we have put in place across our Queensland ports, some very strict measures that have been in place since the end of January, and then we'll hand over to Minister Miles and then Dr Young.

MINISTER BAILEY:

Thanks very much, Premier. Look, Queensland has taken a very strong approach to protecting our ports and our supply chains from late January. We brought in provisions to ensure that there was a 14-day self-quarantine requirement for ships coming into Queensland ports and we've been very strict on that and what we've seen so far is there's been no known infections of nible in Queensland via a Queensland port. And we're very clear and determined that that remain the case. The Chief Health Officer's decision, in terms of cruise ships, is designed to take no chances. We can't take any chances in this circumstance. And the cruise ships will be required to leave Queensland waters by midnight tomorrow night. Currently we have four ships in Queensland waters, two of which have refuelled and are on their way to rendezvous and then out of Queensland waters. One cruise ship is currently in the Brisbane port, fuelling up, and when it leaves, today, the last one, Pacific Dawn, will come in to fuel and bunker up and will leave tomorrow. So this is... Obviously fuelling up and storing is a necessary thing and there's a provision for that to occur, but all these cruise

ships that are currently in Queensland waters have no passengers, they have only crew, and they will be required to leave by midnight tomorrow night.

MINISTER MILES:

Thanks Mark, thanks Premier. We've always said day to day the number of positive cases would vary, and the most important thing was to look at the trend. And this number of 13 overnight continues that downward trend in the number of positive cases. It confirms that we, and all Queenslanders are doing what we need to do to slow the spread of this virus. Of the 934 confirmed cases in Queensland, just 42 are currently in hospital. 11 of those are in ICU requiring ventilation and two further are intensive care not requiring ventilation. We've previously indicated that of Queensland's five deaths, four of them were off cruise ships, 80 per cent of deaths were off cruise ships and so we need to stop these cruise ships coming into Queensland and bringing the virus with them. I would urge all Queenslanders to spend the next couple of days thinking about how they will spend it, the Easter long weekend in and around their homes. The only person we want hopping around Queensland on Sunday is the Easter Bunny, and fortunately the Easter Bunny home delivers. My wife and I are planning an Easter egg hunt as one of our activities for Easter Sunday. But just give some thought to how you'll spend those days and keep the kids entertained. Thank you.

DR YOUNG:

We have seen 119 cases of Queenslanders who've contracted COVID-19 virus whilst on a cruise ship. Then we've seen a further six people contract the infection from one of those people. And unfortunately, and tragically, we've seen 4 deaths as a result of contracting the infection on a cruise ship. That is why it's so important that cruise ships are managed so that they don't have people come off them and go into the general community and spread the virus. We know that cruise ships involve people living very closely together and that's why they're such a risk so it's good to see we're going to prevent that risk flowing on to more Queenslanders. Our efforts today have been very successful due to the work done by every single Queenslanders. Queenslanders have been following the directions and the instructions and the requirements to minimise their travel outside their home. And it's really, really important that continue through this Easter period. People must stay at home unless there is an essential need for them to go out. That's so important. As we continue to manage this outbreak as we go forward.

REPORTER:

Dr Young or the Premier, there have been a number of cruise ships in port since I think, late last week refuelling and restocking – have any of the crew members come ashore for whatever reason?

PREMIER:

Thanks Lane, my understanding is that from the Queen Elizabeth there were three crew – one Australian and two New Zealanders – who disembarked and entered into compulsory isolation and I've heard of one other case on compassionate grounds. The person had to go to another cruise ship, I think it was to South Africa. But I'm happy to check that out for you.

REPORTER:

And there's no evidence of sickness amongst the crew?

PREMIER:

No, no.

REPORTER:

So, we don't have any responsibility for any of those people, any of those crew on those cruise ships? If they do get sick, we don't have any responsibility between now and tomorrow night?

PREMIER:

No as you can see all of the cruise ships are leaving Queensland waters, so this is a very good result and one that I 100 per cent back the Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, in relation to this decision. 100 percent.

REPORTER:

But no one was unwell on those ships?

PREMIER:

No.

REPORTER:

You said there was no passengers?

PREMIER:

That's correct. Only crew, there were no tourist passengers on board these ships.

REPORTER:

Premier are you angry about how the cruise ship situation played out in New South Wales?

PREMIER:

I'm not going to comment on New South Wales. But what is very alarming for us is the fact that people have come from those cruise ships into Queensland, as Dr Young has said, who have tested positive and we have had four tragic deaths from people who have been on the cruise ships. It's very distressing to have four deaths. And I think there's four families who are grieving at the moment.

REPORTER:

Hindsight's a really good thing...

PREMIER:

Sorry?

REPORTER:

Hindsight is a really good thing to be able to have.

PREMIER:

Well let me say very clearly Alison – as Minister Bailey said, from the end of January we've had very strict measures in place in Queensland about ensuring that strict quarantine procedures have been following in the state?

REPORTER:

Do you wish it would have been the same situation in other states?

PREMIER:

I'm not going to comment on other states. That's for them to comment on.

REPORTER:

Is it too soon or are we looking at exit strategies at this stage?

PREMIER:

Look, National Cabinet's going to be meeting this morning, so I'll be heading off to that very shortly and we'll be looking at modelling. I think the Prime Minister has made that public and we'll be discussing that at length. But what we're seeing in Queensland is we wanted to slow the spread and the measures that Queenslanders have taken especially over the last two to three weeks is now paying dividends. We can't ruin that over Easter everyone. We need to keep up the great work. We can't ruin it. We've got a long way to go. Like I said, it's a marathon not a sprint. It's a marathon and we're all in this for the long haul.

REPORTER:

On Friday Premier you said we aren't yet on the curve and you talked about July, August, September before we reach a peak and I think Dr Young suggested things could still get worse. Is that still the case?

PREMIER:

I don't want to pre-empt the modelling discussions that we're going to have at National Cabinet. I'm happy to discuss that further tomorrow.

REPORTER:

Are we still looking at a six-month timeframe?

PREMIER:

Look the Prime Minister's said that as well. Six month and I back that in, we are looking at six months here.

REPORTER:

The Victorian Premier this morning asked that for Term Two all students in Victoria stay home. What is the advice being given to parents here about Term Two?

PREMIER:

Yeah well, Victoria is a different situation. They're about to go back and I'll be meeting with the Education Minister this week and we'll be making some very firm decisions by next Tuesday. Like I said to you everyone – Easter is very important to stay home and slow that spread because it could have an impact on our schools.

REPORTER:

Premier, just on the terrible shark attack up north. Do you have any information? Did he work for the Department of Science?

PREMIER:

Look my understanding is that he was employed by QP...the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and once again, a family out there is grieving for a young man who has tragically lost his life in a horrific shark attack. So, our condolences to the family and there's a lot of his work colleagues I understand who are very upset today. Alright? Thanks everyone, thank you.

[ENDS]

Released under RTI/DPC



Format: Press conference, Rockhampton

Topic: Coronavirus pandemic update

Speaker/s: Queensland Health Minister Steven Miles
Member for Rockhampton Barry O'Rourke
Member for Keppel Brittany Lauga
Queensland Chief Health Officer Dr Jeannette Young

Broadcast: Live stream via [Periscope](#)

Date: 8 April 2020

Duration: 30:11 minutes

E&OE

MINISTER MILES:

This morning we had nine further positive cases of COVID-19 here in Queensland overnight. That is the lowest number we've had in some time and demonstrates that trend is continuing. That our initiatives – our social distancing, contact tracing and border measures are working. And it is a credit to all Queenslanders, to all Queenslanders that we are seeing that reducing trend. Queensland and Australia is the envy of the world in having arrested that early increase in cases. Of those cases 35 are currently in hospital. That is a very low level of hospitalisation and demonstrates just how effective our hospitals are being at treating patients in their virtual wards, that is their homes. 11 of them are currently in intensive care and they are all receiving ventilation. Tragically five lives have been lost to this awful disease and that is a reminder that everything we are all doing is all about saving lives. It is all about reducing the death toll from this horrible disease. Of those cases eight were here in the Central Queensland HHS region, one is now considered to have recovered. So seven are active and being treated in that virtual wards. They have completed roughly 1360 tests for COVID-19. Jeanette Young, the Chief Health Officer, and I along with our local MP's, Brittany and Barry, are here to receive a briefing on the hospital's preparedness for a future outbreak. And I can tell you, they are very well prepared. Our fantastic hospital staff here at the Central Queensland HHS – our doctors, our nurses, our public health units, our support staff, all of our health professionals are fantastic. We have fantastic hospitals and facilities. And all Central Queensland residents should be very well assured that we are very well equipped to take care of them if we experience a COVID-19 outbreak. Recently the Palaszczuk Government announced that we would invest \$1.2 billion dollars of additional funding into our health system to deal with this COVID-19 outbreak and today I can confirm that Central Queensland HHS's share of that could be expected to be up to \$96 million dollars in additional funding. We have already allocated four additional paramedics to ensure that our ambulance services can respond. The

team here have tripled the size of the Public Health Unit from 11 to 33. They're those detectives that go out as soon as we get a positive case and identify all of the people who could have been in contact with them, putting them in to quarantine and squashing every potential outbreak. Their work is incredibly important. There is already plans in place to quadruple the intensive care capacity within the HHS and increase inpatient ward capacity by roughly 200 additional beds. That's on top of all of that capacity in the virtual wards. The hospital in the home program. There are lots of beautiful places in and around the Central Queensland region and as you can see from the weather, it looks like it's going to be a beautiful Easter weekend. And that what makes what we are asking all Queenslanders to do this Easter weekend even harder. We're asking you not to go away. Not to go on holidays. But instead holiday at home. Stay at home. Only leave home for those essential reasons. I know that is very hard but if we all do it, we will save lives. And we will ensure that our hard working doctors and nurses and health professionals don't have to deal with an excessive number of COVID-19 cases. That they will be able to deliver all of the care that they need to deliver to anyone who has this virus. As well as anyone else who will get sick over this period. Throughout this entire outbreak people will continue to have babies. Sadly people will keep having strokes and heart attacks. And all of our efforts will make sure that we can continue to save lives throughout this period. I know that Brittany and Barry have been calling older residents in particular in the region to check-in on them and see how they're going. And the feedback so far has been really great. That people are taking on board the health messaging and that they feel well looked after. But I might ask Brittany and Barry to say something on behalf of the local community before handing over to our fantastic Chief Health Officer, Dr Jeanette Young.

BARRY O'ROURKE:

Good afternoon, Barry O'Rourke, Member for Rockhampton. Firstly I'd just like to really acknowledge the great work of the Central Queensland Health and Hospital's District – management and staff. They've been working tirelessly for our community which is absolutely wonderful. It's great to see that we've seen a real slowing of the COVID virus here in Central Queensland which is really important. Just on the Easter weekend. You know, it's an absolutely beautiful weekend by the looks of it coming up. And like everyone I'd love to be able to go away and go fishing and camping and all those good things but for the betterment of our community – please stay at home. We actually really need everyone to stay at home. Spend some time with the family. Do those odd jobs around the yard. All those sorts of things, it's just so important. Now more than ever. We're going well in Queensland, we just need everyone to keep stepping up in this space.

BRITTANY LAUGA:

Thanks Barry. Brittany Lauga, State Member for Keppel. It's a real honour and privilege to have the Health Minister and the Chief Health Officer of Queensland in Rockhampton today to ground truth the beds and the preparation that have been put into place. The wonderful preparation that has been put into place by the Central Queensland Health and Hospital Service. And can I acknowledge the work by the CEO and all of the team at the CQHHS, across not only the Rockhampton Hospital but across all of the hospitals in Central Queensland and also our aged care facilities. For the work that our nurses and doctors, health

care workers across this region are doing to help prepare for the planned increase in patients that we're likely to see as a result of COVID-19. COVID-19 is a virus which is going to impact our community. We're already seeing people across Queensland impacted by this virus. We're seeing an economy that's impacted by this virus. Our health service is ready as a result of the Premier and our Health Minister declaring a State of Emergency back in January. Our Chief Health Officer and our Minister have been giving warnings and directions since then with respect to how we best prepare for this virus in our community. The Central Queensland community has done a stellar job at preparing for this virus. Our community is one of the most resilient in the world I would say because we have had practice that makes perfect. We have been through cyclones, we have been through natural disasters. We know how to respond to crisis like this and COVID-19 is just like any cyclone or natural disaster that we've faced in the past where we are able to band together. Listen to the authorities and do what is required of us in order to combat this war. I'd like to also thank Barry O'Rourke for his work in the local community. Helping local businesses stay afloat. We know that the business community and the economy is really struggling. I'd also like to acknowledge the five and half million dollars that the Premier announced today to combat the scourge of domestic and family violence in our community. Especially at a time when our community is stressed. We know from other communities in the world like Japan and China that domestic and family violence is on an increase as a result of the stress and anxiety that people experience as a result of this virus. Domestic and family violence is a scourge regardless of a virus but because of the anxiety and the stress that people are feeling, I believe that the preventative measures and the five and half million dollars that the Palaszczuk Government has committed today is a wonderful way in which we can start preparing for a potential increase that we might see into the future. This is about helping women and men and children who are victims of domestic and family violence escape that violence and make sure that they can escape to safe home regardless of whether there's a virus in our community or not. Can I thank the Chief Health Officer and I'll pass to you for further comment.

DR YOUNG:

Well it's wonderful to be here in Rockhampton. So first off, I know that Rockhampton Hospital and indeed, the whole Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service is very well prepared to manage anything that may eventuate from the COVID-19 pandemic. So you've already had eight cases here that have all been identified early on and you've had no local transmission. That is so important, that is what we're all aiming for. We know that we'll continue to get cases because Australians and Queenslanders are continuing to return home from overseas and we just need to manage those cases so that there isn't ongoing transmission. You've done that here and you'll continue to do it. It's really important that although it's going to be so hard this weekend. I know Rockhampton well from my time when I was here a few decades ago. They're the most beautiful places to go for a long weekend. And I'm really sorry to have to again say to people please don't do that. Please – for this long weekend and going forward, stay at home with your immediate family.

There's only four reasons really to leave your own household. And that is to buy essential supplies, food and the like. It is to access health care if you need it. Or to provide support to a vulnerable person – to your grandparents, to a vulnerable person in your neighbourhood. Please support to them. Thirdly to have some exercise, we all need to have exercise. But its

that. It's leaving your home to go for a walk along the river. You have a beautiful river here in Rockhampton with some great walking trails along it. So its to go out to a park to exercise. And the fourth one is for those people who cannot work or get their education at home. To be able to go to work and if they needed to, for education. But that's for those people who can't do it online. So really its pretty restrictive. I am asking everyone please, stay in your own home. And if we do that, we'll be able to continue to manage this going forward.

We had 9 new cases overnight in Queensland – none here in central Queensland. We want to continue to have those numbers as low as possible. Because we know most people will get mild disease and recover, there are people who'll get very very serious disease. And here in Queensland unfortunately we've already had 5 deaths. So we want to minimise that. And although the majority of that severe disease is in older people who are vulnerable, who have chronic disease, we have seen overseas some younger people tragically succumb to this disease. So it's important that we decrease the amount of disease in our communities to protect as many lives as we possible can going forward. Thank you.

REPORTER:

Dr Young, if I may. Do Queenslanders returning home from mandatory self-isolation in New South Wales need to isolate again?

DR YOUNG:

At this point in time, they don't. So if they've gone into 14 days quarantine in New South Wales and then they go directly from that place of quarantine into Queensland, they don't need to because they haven't been exposed to anyone in New South Wales. We do know that Sydney at the moment is getting sustained human-to-human transmission of COVID-19 and they don't know where that's happening. They don't know the cause of it.

We've had a little bit of that in Queensland, so as a result in Queensland I've asked the testing in Gold Coast, Brisbane, and Cairns to be increased to anyone with respiratory symptoms compatible with COVID-19. But here in Central Queensland you've not had any community transmission to date.

They have had in New South Wales, which is why we're keeping a very very close eye on what's happening in New South Wales. Because down the track, we may be requiring people to go into quarantine when they come home to Queensland from certain parts of New South Wales. But that's not in place at the moment, so anyone who's come from overseas and gone into that 14 days quarantine, they don't need to do it again in Queensland.

REPORTER:

Do we know of the 288 people released from the Sydney hotel this morning, do we know if any of them are Queenslanders?

DR YOUNG:

No I don't, but I'm not concerned about them for that same reason.

REPORTER:

In terms of the 288 people released from the Sydney hotel this morning, do we know if any of them are Queenslanders?

DR YOUNG:

No I don't but I'm not concerned about them so that exact same reason. As long as they go straight from that hotel to the airport and home to Queensland that's fine – they've done their 14 days of quarantine so they're at no risk because of their exposure overseas. And then similarly as long as they go from that hotel to the airport they're not at any risk of having picked it up in NSW.

REPORTER:

How's the Queensland stock piling going in terms of ventilators and PPE?

DR YOUNG:

Yes, so we've been able to access significant additional supplies of both. A lot of work has been done during the past month or so to be able to make sure Queensland has got enough personal protective equipment for the healthcare workers who need it. And we've also got enough ventilators on order that we know will be arriving to meet the requirements. So I initially asked that every hospital in Queensland double their ventilation capacity, doubled their ICU capacity which they went and did. I've now asked them to triple that. Here in central Queensland they're ahead – as they always are with their planning – they are excellent – and they've got four times the amount that I initially knew they had. So they've gone four times what they normally would have.

REPORTER:

A JCU infectious disease expert says we should be looking to squash the curve instead of flattening it. What are your thoughts on this?

DR YOUNG:

I'm not sure about squashing, but that's what we've done. I haven't thought of it in that terminology, but we've well and truly...if you go online and look at our graphs, in Australia we've gone like that and come right down. But we have to recognise that it's a point in time, so to flatten the curve is actually about when we get sustained community transmission and we start getting the cases and we start needing to admit large numbers of people to ICU. And that's where the flattening comes. So instead of going like that which is what we would've had to have done if we hadn't put any measures in place and that's what we've seen happening unfortunately in Italy and the United States and many other countries. We're not in that position because we won't have that because we have had so many measures put in place. So we immediately due to those measures ended up with a broader curve. Now with all the additional work that has happened in terms of essentially closing our borders except to Australians returning home and requiring them to go into quarantine and looking at all of our internal restrictions, essentially really not allowing people outside of their own homes except for those four things I spoke about earlier. We're going to flatten that curve. But that's down the track. We have, squashed the curve at the moment.

REPORTER:

She was saying if the pandemic was to stay under control for two weeks, continue at the way as it is we should look at herd immunity, so that's relaxing restrictions for those that are less vulnerable. Is that something we could potentially see happening?

DR YOUNG:

The only problem with herd immunity is that an awful lot of people would need to get it and there would be a lot of deaths. So no, I'm not in favour of that. What I am in favour of is that we try and decrease the number of cases as much as possible until we get a vaccine. And then once we have a vaccine we can provide herd immunity through vaccinations. Providing herd immunity from allowing people to get it is a risky strategy. As I said, most people who get it and develop complications will be older people, but we always know there will be exceptions to that. And we've seen that happen overseas where very young people have got it and died. So herd immunity is a difficult concept I think to progress.

REPORTER:

Dr Young we've had [inaudible] shut down this week with a staff member coming into contact with someone with coronavirus? How are we certain that that hasn't progressed beyond that and there is still no community transmission in central Queensland?

DR YOUNG:

Because you do have a fever clinic here plus you have people coming forward who have symptoms so we would pick it up?

REPORTER:

What's the status on the health alert for the Qantas flight on the 21st...24th of March that we have?

DR YOUNG:

I'm not sure about that one off the top of my head...

REPORTER:

It's just an outstanding health alert...

DR YOUNG:

That's a while ago sorry, it would've been worked though the system by now.

REPORTER:

How many testing kits do we have available in Queensland at the moment and is that enough?

DR YOUNG:

We're getting more all of the time, and we're very, very lucky in Queensland that we have four different platforms that we can use to test. So therefore, if one test kit is no longer available as we had problems with Rosche, they weren't able to meet demand, then we can move our testing to the other platforms. So we've got plenty of capacity in Queensland to test

which is why I went out on Monday and asked those communities in the Gold Coast, Brisbane and Cairns to increase their testing to anyone with respiratory symptoms so those people who don't need to have a travel history, or a history of being in contact with a case.

REPORTER:

Can you provide an update on the Brisbane nurse that has tested positive? Would her colleagues also be tested and if they are when will we find out their results?

DR YOUNG:

They will be tested if they develop symptoms, so there is no point ever in testing someone who doesn't have any symptoms. But her colleagues now will be asked to quarantine, and if they develop any symptoms they will be tested at that point in time. No different to anywhere else in the community.

REPORTER:

And we're seeing a second drive through clinic open in Cairns next week, does it mean more people will be able to be tested given strict requirements or have they been loosened?

DR YOUNG:

Of course, so that's why they would've done that.

REPORTER:

And Virginia...I don't know her last name...Epstein accuser...she's up in Cairns and has hit out at the health system because she was forced to leave the hospital saying despite saying she had a high temperature. Have you heard anything about this?

DR YOUNG:

I haven't heard about that specific case but as I said on Monday, I loosened the criteria to enable people to do more testing. So possibly when she presented at that time she meet the criteria. But I am not aware of the specifics of that case.

REPORTER:

Here in central Queensland we've seen a bit of confusion about the number of cases that have gone up and down a number of times...I know the other week it went from nine to eight in 24 hours. Do you have anything to say about this?

MINISTER MILES:

Obviously, there's an incredible amount of interest in this disease and these cases, and that's why we're working as quickly as we can to provide data to the public. But moving quickly means that we then need to validate that data and double check that data and that means that sometimes will identify cases that were recorded as positive that should've been negative or vice-versa. That shouldn't cause any concern in the public. It in fact should give the public confidence that we are one getting information out as quickly as we can but two, constantly checking that information to ensure that it remains accurate.

REPORTER:

With that release that came out that said ‘nine,’ there was actually an email that followed it to the CQHHS that afternoon identifying that that was actually incorrect. An email actually read that it would be corrected the next day. Don’t you think that maybe if just the changing of one number of a release it should be amended and resent out that same day so that the correct information is broadcast through the media?

MINISTER MILES:

Oh look, I can understand that concern, but equally there is a concern in ensuring that we pick a point in time each day and provide that information. And so while it might be easy to pick out one particular case while we are dealing with very small numbers, we need a system in place that will allow us to provide timely and accurate information statewide when we are potentially dealing with thousands of cases, and when it is not possible to be tracking individual ones. And that is why we are following the process that has been determined, which is that the Chief Health Officer verifies some data early in the morning – roughly 6:30am. That goes into a report provided to me at 7:00am, and that’s the information that we provide during the day.

REPORTER:

Well, if it is happening at 6:30 or 7:00am in the morning why have there been some days where we see releases come through at 7:00pm after the nightly news has already aired?

MINISTER MILES:

That kind of information that is released later in the day usually relates to specific Public Health alerts, for which we want to get to the public very quickly. So, I talked earlier about the work of our contract tracers, and oftentimes their job is easy. Oftentimes the people who have tested positive have only been to certain places, and they are places where we have lists of the people who have been there. So universities for example, planes for example, restaurants for example. But other times, they will have been to places where it is not so easy to track down all of the people who have been there, and that’s when we issue those Public Health alerts. And, as you would expect, we aim to get them out as quick as we possibly can so that people can get that information as quickly as we possibly can. Also, we have chosen on a number of occasions to notify the public of deaths where they have occurred subsequent to the day’s data releases, but where the information can be verified and where patient’s families have been appropriately notified that that information will be released. So we are trying to balance the needs to have a statewide health response, feeding that health response into what is a national health response, while also providing as much information to local communities as we can.

REPORTER:

There has been a lot of talk about kind of shutting down regions in Queensland, especially North Queensland and regional areas. Is that a discussion that’s being had or...?

MINISTER MILES:

No. And the reason it hasn't been is that the more recent social distancing measures really superseded that. Those discussions might have been had before we limited all nonessential movements. Now that we have limited all nonessential movements there is not really any need to discuss nonessential movements between regions because they are already essentially outlawed by that ruling.

REPORTER:

The people who are still allowed to fly here within Queensland unchecked, where the flights are still going to certain places, like Rockhampton. How can you assure that that's all essential travel?

MINISTER MILES:

Well, they are only permitted to do that kind of travel within the state where it is essential. That's where it meets those four strict criteria, and our police are checking that. There is a hotline where members of the public can notify us that they believe someone is breaching those orders. Police are investigating that, police are handing out fines. That is happening right now. And so my message to anyone who is considering travelling, who thinks they might be able to get around these strict social distancing measures: Well first of all, you are putting yourself and your community's safety at risk, but you are also risking very substantial fines – more than \$1300 on-the-spot fines, as well as more than \$13,000 if you go to court.

REPORTER:

So there is police in airports checking who gets on and off planes within Queensland?

MINISTER MILES:

Oh they are not checking everyone getting on and off those regional flights. They are checking all international arrivals and, as I understand it, many domestic arrivals to enforce those border restrictions. But the rules that have been put in place do apply to all Queenslanders and restrict any nonessential travel. And so anyone caught in the first instance may be warned. They may be instructed to return to their home or to quarantine, depending on their circumstances. But the police do have, and have been using, the power to hand out those very, very big fines.

REPORTER:

Minister. I was just going to say, you've called for people to stop home this Easter, but there's still hundreds of people travelling to and from mining companies out west. Obviously it is an essential service, but does the government have a plan if there is one positive case even in one of those mining camps, as there are hundreds of people that are out there that could have been in contact with [inaudible]?

MINISTER MILES:

Yeah. Fly-in, fly-out and drive-in, drive-out workplaces are an area of particular concern. And Jeannette, the Chief Health Officer, along with our Mines Minister Anthony Lynham, and all of the resource companies have been working very carefully to have protocols in place, both to limit as far as possible to zero the risk, and then also response plans, where a

worker does come down with symptoms. It is important to emphasize a couple of things. First of all, we all rely on those resources for our day-to-day lives - they are essential. And so it is important that as far as possible we keep them operating. Secondly, those employers have very strong financial incentives to ensure that their operations continue. And so they are being very cooperative in working with their workforces, with the government, and with health authorities to ensure that they put health and safety measures in place to reduce the risks of an outbreak. It is not in their interests whatsoever to risk having to shut their operations down if they have, for example, an outbreak in a workcamp. Restrictions have already been placed on fly-in, fly-out workers coming from other states, particularly those states with wider community outbreaks. And so those measures will continue to be reviewed and considered and implemented over time. If you want more detail, I'm happy to ask Jeannette to speak further to it if...

REPORTER:

That's alright.

REPORTER:

Sorry, just about Mackay's birthing centre changes. They are obviously moving to the labor ward at the hospital. How is this change going to keep the community safe?

MINISTER MILES:

Oh look, I'm not across that detail for Mackay, I'm afraid. I'm happy to answer that [inaudible].

REPORTER:

Yeah, there was an announcement made on Facebook. A lot of women are upset about the change, so it was announced on Facebook that the birthing centre would be moving to the labour wards.

MINISTER MILES:

Yeah. I'm not across that, but I'm happy to get a response for you. So, thank you.

[ENDS]

Engagement: Press conference

Speaker/s: Health Minister Steven Miles; Glenn Butcher MP;
Chief Health Officer

Airdate: 9 April 2020

Duration: 33 minutes 15 seconds

E&OE

MINISTER MILES:

It's now more than 10 weeks since our first case of COVID-19 here in Queensland and the fact that overnight we've only had 10 additional positive cases is really quite an incredible result and a credit to all Queenslanders but we need to keep it up. Of our 953 cases 123 of those are from returned cruise ships. We now consider 372 recovered meaning we have 576 active cases within Queensland being managed by our fantastic health staff. We now done nearly 63,500 tests, tested that many patients. And in the last day we did 3,000 tests, more than 3,000 tests meaning that testing rate is increasing which we want to see. If you consider that of those 3000 tests only 10 were positive, that is an incredibly low positive rate. Nowhere else in the world have they managed to get on top of their early outbreak of this disease as well and as effectively as Australia and indeed Queensland have. We have just 33 cases in our hospitals. 12 of those are in intensive care. Of those 33 cases in hospital only three of them are north of the Sunshine Coast demonstrating just how well our regional hospital and health services are treating people, finding cases, isolating them as well as providing treatment in people's homes. They are virtual wards rather than in their hospitals. Yesterday you heard me outline just how well prepared the Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service is for a potential outbreak. They have only had eight cases in the CQ area. Seven considered active, but they have done an incredibly good job of getting on top of those while also preparing for surge capacity. Quadrupling the intensive care capacity, providing for increases in ward capacity and fever clinics if and when they are required. And it is, of course, a credit to Steve and Paul and their teams particularly the public health units who I spent some time with yesterday, they have done a fantastic job, but today I have a very special announcement to them do that even better. Today, I can confirm that we have a budget decision. We have funds set aside to purchase the Gladstone Mater and add it to the Central Queensland Hospital and Health Services capacity. That will, during a COVID-19 outbreak, allow us to have a dedicated COVID ward of 34 beds as well as a dedicated COVID-19 intensive care unit of between four and 12 beds. At the end of the pandemic, we will complete a purchase of the hospital, add it to the stock of the Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service and we are working through a model which will allow private providers to continue to operate from that hospital. I want to congratulate Glen Butcher who has really been talking to me about purchasing this hospital since the day I became Health Minister. He has put the case that it is a facility that the community wants to see rescued and added to our health services and that the community sees the value in having an ongoing hybrid public-private offering here in Gladstone and I'm very excited that we are able to

deliver that now. Deliver capacity to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic and then longer term, expansion capacity. Also, of course, the mayor, Matt Burnett. I would like to congratulate him on his resounding re-election. He has been also been a passionate advocate for the state to purchase the Gladstone Mater. I'd like to thank the Mater for working with us and bearing with us through this process. They have been very accommodating, working with us in good faith and them and their staff are very valued partners to us not just here in Gladstone but right across the state. When you take into account the 36 extra treatment spaces that you can see right behind me, that you can see being built right behind me it demonstrates out commitment to expanding health services in the regions. The Palaszczuk Government's commitment to expanding services here in Gladstone is demonstrated with our new buildings as well as this decision to purchase the Gladstone Mater. We are also outlining today, and the Chief Health Officer will outline in more detail today, new measures that we are implementing to limit the importation of the COVID-19 virus from hotspots in other parts of the country. The Chief Health Officer has been monitoring cases in other states and will be making determinations based on hotspots of outbreaks that will apply not just to people returning to the state from interstate but also Queenslanders returning to the state. And this really is a warning to everybody. Even if you are a Queensland residents, if you travel, if you travel in the future...particularly this Easter weekend, but in the future and you travel to a place that might be determined even down the track to be a hotspot – on your return if we identify that you have been to what has been determined to be a hotspot, you will be required to quarantine for 14 days. This is an important new measure to ensure that Queenslanders don't travel to those hotspots and return to Queensland to spread COVID-19. Ultimately, we hope this acts as a powerful disincentive to stop people travelling. We don't want Queenslanders travelling. We want you to stay here where it is safe and we can take care of you in our fantastic hospital and that's what this measure is designed to do. I'll allow the Chief Health Officer to outline in a moment exactly how that will work and when that is likely to come into effect. But we are announcing it today so that people as they make their decisions about what to do at the weekend can understand what the possible ramifications are. You know, I often spend with my family the Easter holidays in Northern New South Wales and we of course won't be this year because of the COVID-19 threat and because of all of these warnings. And I'm urging anyone who's thinking right now about packing the car up. Who's thinking right now about throwing the boogie boards in the back of the car and taking the kids to the beach – please don't. please don't. We can't tell you where there will be an outbreak down the track. We only know where those outbreaks are right now. Especially if you're travelling interstate you could well find yourself having to, being ordered to by law, quarantine yourself for 14 days. We know that this will be a very different Easter. It's already been a very different year. It's a very different school holidays, school break. And this will be a very different Easter. We know we are asking a lot of people but we are doing that to save lives. To save the lives of Queenslanders and to make the jobs of our health workers easier as they go about their important work day to day to save lives. I'm going to ask Glen Butcher to ay something about his very extensive efforts to get to where we are today and then of course, the Chief Health Officer to provide her update.

GLEN BUTCHER:

I'd love to shake your hand. If ever I've wanted to give someone a hug it's today but unfortunately I can't. I would like to obviously acknowledge the Minister, Steven Miles for

being here today in Gladstone to make this absolutely fantastic announcement for the community of Gladstone. The announcement today that we are buying the Mater Hospital for the Gladstone community, not only for the public people but for those people who have private health insurance, now can be assured that our services here in Gladstone will continue to get better and better and better. We've seen over the years, the five years since I've been the state Member, the first thing I did I stood on a platform to improve health in the Gladstone region. I was sick, as was the community, of people having to travel to Rockhampton to get the basic services that we deserve right here in the Gladstone region. Since that time, \$42 million has been delivered in what we see behind us in a brand new accident emergency being delivered here in Gladstone. We've also seen a \$4.7 million step up, step down facility for mental health here in the Gladstone region. When the Mater hospital, and one of the big reasons why we're here today, started to close down services, we invested \$1.2 million to bring maternity services to the public hospital. And now, with the new accident emergency going forward, we are also going to put \$1.1 million into a specialist outpatient unit going into the old accident emergency, and then to top all that off in increasing our health services here in Gladstone, we are now purchasing the Mater hospital here in Gladstone.

This is a two-fold benefit, as the Minister said, not only can we help Gladstone get through this pandemic COVID virus going through the Gladstone region if and when it comes, but we can also, afterwards, then take it under the wing of Central Queensland Health and Hospital Services and turn it into a co-shared facility where those people who have private health insurance can certainly access those facilities there, but also, the Gladstone Hospital can utilise those operating theatres and those beds over there when needed for the people of the Gladstone area. So fantastic to have the Minister here today. Fantastic to have the Chief Health Officer here as well today. Certainly tough times for the Gladstone region, but this is a reason for us today to have a big cheer and a big smile without any hugs today in Gladstone. Thank you.

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Well I recently had the opportunity to look through the Mater Gladstone facility and thought at the time it would be absolutely superb as a COVID hospital for when it will be needed, so it is great to see today it will be able to be that. And after, when this pandemic has ended, it'll be a facility for the use of the people who live in Gladstone, which is excellent. So Queenslanders have heard the message about what needs to be done to meet this threat due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and as a result, in Queensland today, we have only had an additional 10 cases overnight, which is an absolutely fantastic outcome. To maintain it though, we need to be vigilant. We cannot relax. Just because we've seen, over the last few days, a decrease in the number cases, were we to release any of the restrictions that are currently in place, we would rapidly see an increase, as has unfortunately been seen in quite a few countries overseas.

So we need to be vigilant, we need to continue what we're doing. So we are, at the moment, keeping a very, very close eye on what is happening interstate. We have seen fewer and fewer cases due to people returning from overseas because the number of people coming from overseas has plummeted. So now we're seeing increased case numbers from people who have

returned from interstate. So our domestic borders are essentially closed to any non-Queenslanders, but they are open to Queenslanders, and they will of course always be open to Queenslanders. But any Queenslanders who now go interstate to an area deemed to be a hotspot, so an area where there is significant transmission of cases, when they return to Queensland, as of midnight tomorrow night, they'll be required to go into quarantine, and that's to protect other members of the community. So anyone going to a hotspot as of midnight tomorrow night, when they return will need to be in quarantine for 14 days.

At this point in time, we believe, but we are keeping a close eye, we believe that greater Sydney will be declared a hotspot and potentially other parts of both New South Wales and Victoria. So people will need to understand that when they make their plans to go interstate over the Easter period. So we've all heard the advice that really you should not be leaving your own home at this point in time. There are only four reasons to leave your own home and the vast majority of Queenslanders have been following those four reasons. The first is to buy essential services – food, of course. The second is to access healthcare or to provide support to a vulnerable person. The third is to go to work if it's work that's essential and you can't do from home, or, of course, to access education. Again, if you can't do that from home for whatever reason, for instance if you're a child of parents who are in essential occupations and need to go to work. Then the fourth is for exercise, but that is genuinely for exercise. It isn't to go to a beach to sunbake, it's for exercise. And if your beach is walking distance, to go for a walk along the beach, of course. They're the only reasons people should be leaving their homes at this point in time, not to go interstate for a holiday. This is not the year to do that. We'll all be thrilled when we can do that again, but now is not the time. And because of the risk of going to certain places in Australia, if you come back from those places and it was not essential that you visit those places, you will be required to go into quarantine. Thank you.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

MINISTER MILES:

I've seen some of those comments and normally I'd just ignore them, she's pretty irrelevant. I want to underline, though, to all Queenslanders that I am the Health Minister for all of Queensland, and the Chief Health Officer is the Chief Health Officer for all of Queensland. And we take very seriously, very seriously, ensuring that all of our regions are well prepared for COVID-19. This is not just a battle in Brisbane or the south east, we need to ensure that our entire hospital system is ready. I will ask the Chief Health Officer in a moment to outline precisely why she and I determined that this trip was essential and important, and also the precautions that we have taken. But let me say this one thing to that woman – I will not stand for you criticising our Chief Health Officer. She is doing, and has done, a fantastic job. I might be fair game on your Facebook page, but she is not, and I don't think Queenslanders are very interested in your attempt to play politics with this.

DR YOUNG:

I believe my role is critical in terms of going out across the state and making sure that every single facility no matter where it is has all the resources they need to respond. I don't know all the issues across the state unless I'm out there asking. And I think it is always far, far

more effective to get out on the ground and to talk to people and I will continue doing that as long as I'm able to do it. It is critically important. I can not over emphasise that. The fact that I was here not long ago and was able to look at your fantastic facility here that you have meant that I could work through and say that for this part of Queensland you have got the perfect facility to turn into a COVID-19 hospital. It's got everything that could be needed. In fact, if I designed the facility and built it for that purpose it couldn't have been done better. Now I could only have done that by actually being here and seeing it. It's impossible. You can try your hardest, and I did, to look at floorplans, to look at all of the systems, to look at everything. But without coming and looking at it, it wouldn't have had the same ability for me to say that is the right thing to do. And also, I need to talk to people and still I need to do that in person and ask people what is it that they need. Because I know time and time again I'll speak to them on the phone, I'll speak to them in a larger group and they'll say everything is perfect because they are so supportive but when I get a chance to talk to them one on one which I do when I come out, they'll say "look, we actually could do with a bit more here or a bit more there". And the issues across the state are enormously different. We are very, very big state. And I am the Chief Health Officer for all of Queensland and if I can't get out and talk to people, I can't do my job. So, I want people to understand that's why I keep travelling and I will keep talking to people. I will always talk to people on the phone, of course I will. But I think it is really important to get out and talk to as many people on the ground and to just go out and look what is really happening and what facilities are needed. As well, like all of us, we are humans. We look at those signals that people... people might be saying something but then you look at them and think no, there's something not quite right here. They're a bit more concerned, what is it that I can do. So that's my job and I will keep doing it. Thankyou.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

DR YOUNG:

Yes, that is being formulated at the moment with Minister Grace and with the Director-General so that information will be coming out shortly to make sure that our schools are a safe environment for the children that are attending. And of course, that they're a safe environment for the teachers who are there.

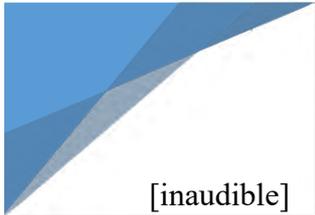
REPORTER:

[inaudible]

DR YOUNG:

No, it's only for people that don't have a genuine reason. So for instance, if there was a compassionate reason. If they were attending Sydney because their parents were palliative or, if there was some genuine reason then of course, we would look at that. But if they're going purely to catch up with friends, with family, to have a holiday then that is not essential. So really, this is really hard for everyone. I don't underestimate what people are being asked to do but it's absolutely critical and we need everyone to hear the message.

REPORTER:



[inaudible]

DR YOUNG:

We will keep on top of it if everyone adheres rigidly to the processes that are in place. But if those restrictions decrease then we will see a rapid increase. We're watching very, very carefully what's happening in Wuhan at the moment. So they went through a massive peak and had to get on top of it and they didn't have any other option because that's where it started. They're now removing those restrictions, so we'll be watching very carefully for when they get their next wave.

REPORTER:

Are Red Cross Lifeblood nurses required to masks?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Are they required to? Is that the question? That is up to Lifeblood, Red Cross, to work through their risk mitigation strategy, so they'll be making decisions about that. I know they've got a lot of really good systems in place because they keep on letting me know about them, but that is a national decision. They're part of a national organisation.

So, it does depend a bit about where those nurses are. For instance, here in Gladstone you have no community spread. None. So there is no concern that people out there on the streets of Gladstone have the infection and are spreading it.

We do have some concerns down in the Gold Coast, in Brisbane and up in Cairns, which is why we introduced a requirement for the health services there to increase the amount of testing they were doing. Which they immediately responded to. So in the last 24 hours they've tested 3000 Queenslanders for COVID-19. They only found 10 out of those 3000 they tested. So we don't have community transmission here in Gladstone, but having said that the Red Cross is a national body so they're working through national protocols.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

They're absolutely appalling. I can't say anything other than that. For any member of our community to try to infect another member of their community, whether that be a health care worker or someone in the street is terrible. If people are sick for any reason whatsoever, they really and truly must stay home. That is more important than ever before.

If they've got any questions about what they should do, they should ring 13 HEALTH or ring their local GP surgery and ask what they should do. But no one at this point in time should be coughing on anyone, and to do it deliberately is absolutely appalling.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

DR YOUNG:

Actually the most important message is what you are all doing here today, and I am very, very grateful to what you are doing. The messages that the media has got out across our state have been absolutely amazing. When I can come out one day and say we're going to increase community testing, and the next day see an increase from 600 tests, to 1700 tests to 3000 tests is not only our healthcare workers doing a brilliant job, but the community coming forward and coming tested. So, you are all getting out the messages. So if you could just get out that message again, which you have been, that no one should be coughing on anyone else in our community, and absolutely not coughing on any healthcare workers, that is really, really important. So, thank you.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

MINISTER MILES:

You will all have seen my comments last week about the stories I heard on the ground in Mackay, and they were genuinely disturbing. Our healthcare workers, they get up everyday and they go to work to take care of us, sometimes they take risks to take care of us, and all of us should do everything we possibly can to take care of them. I hadn't heard those specific reports, but if they are true, they are disturbing, all our hospitals have very strong security and safety measures in place, many have security officers, many have security cameras. People should know that we will exercise every legal power we have to hold to account anyone who hurts one of our health staff. But, I'd prefer to be talking about the opposite. I'd prefer to be saying to Queenslanders, if you see one of our health staff out and about, if you go to one of our hospitals, take a second to thank them. Take a second to tell them how much you appreciate what they're doing. If you're standing behind them – a metre and a half behind them at a café queue – offer to buy their coffee for them, you'll make their day.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

MINISTER MILES:

So I'll ask the Chief Health Officer to address the specific details of that, one particular funeral, we are aware of it. Of all of the measures we have put into place, of all of the difficult decisions we've made since, really since mid-January where we started to see and declare this health emergency, the hardest, the most heartbreaking has been the rules around funerals. To know that we are telling Queenslanders whose relatives and friends might die during this period, that they won't get the chance to grieve as they normally would, it really does upset me. We have received a number of exemption requests, and they have been carefully considered, they've been particularly considered where there is, for example, a sudden loss of life, for example the loss of a child, where the mourners are likely to be younger and less likely to be vulnerable and where they are able to put in place social distancing measures to reduce the risk. So those things are actively considered. The particular incident you referred to though, is very, very complicated and I know the Chief Health Officer has taken a close personal interest in attempting, to the extent we can, to manage, and so I'll ask her to add to what I've just said.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

MINISTER MILES:

We are able to get that number, and a number of them were for just a small number more than the 10, and we are intending to change that limit. At the moment that limit includes those officiating – they funeral director type folk – I understand other states have not included them, and so we are looking at making it 10 mourners, 10 family members. That will release some of the pressure and also mean that a number of the people who have sought, and got, exemptions would not have needed them under that arrangement. We are really trying to be as understanding as we possibly can. But funerals are high-risk events, they are often gatherings of older people who we know are vulnerable. They are events that people travel from different communities to be at, and then travel back to their home communities, and that is why along with weddings we see them as high-risk events and we've had to put those rules in place. As I say, I find them particularly sad.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

MINISTER MILES:

There is a number embedded in the budget figures, it was included in that \$1.2 billion announcement that we made a couple of weeks ago. As you'd understand though, we're a purchaser going through a process with a vendor. While they are close friends and partners, we won't be signalling how much we've put aside.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

MINISTER MILES:

No, the sale is not finalised and what our intention is, is to negotiate an agreement which would agree a purchase and a purchase price now for a purchase that would become effective once we've gotten through the pandemic. That will allow the hospital to continue to operate its current services while also opening up that new COVID-19 ward and ICU when they're required.

DR YOUNG:

Okay. I've had to make a lot of very difficult decisions over the last few months, but I must admit, having to make decisions about how many people can attend a funeral has been particularly hard. Especially some of the funerals have been so tragic, of young children who were run over by accident and then there's a family with parents and grandparents. It has been terrible. And this particular funeral, happening in Mackay, I have been involved with and I have seen some of the very difficult decisions. This is a very significant elder for that community who has died. And normally they would expect many, many hundreds, if not thousands of people to attend. So right from the word go, they significantly limited the number of attendees and we've continued to work with that community about reducing the

numbers and that is being done through the local health service who has done a fantastic job and then making sure that it would occur outside, a bit like we are here today, we've got a number of people here today, so maintaining that social distance and then working that some of the funeral attendees will remain in their cars, that making sure that no-one who attends is sick, limiting some of the people who are more vulnerable limited people from certain parts of Queensland attending, a whole range of strategies so this has been a very very much an ongoing negotiation with the family who are organising the funeral with the local community, with the local health service, the local disaster management group so a lot of work is being put in place to provide that assistance so that the funeral could go ahead to mourn a very very significant person. These decisions are difficult decisions for all us in our community and everyone I know is doing their absolute best to adhere to them. And we can see the results in the numbers coming through each day in Queensland. Thank you.

REPORTER:

Inaudible question

DR YOUNG:

There's a whole range of measures being put in place so the public health unit will have their expert staff who fully understand what needs to happen there. They've already been working through who should attend, who should stay in their cars, who should not come at all, they've worked all that through and they'll work there as the funeral happens.

REPORTER:

Inaudible question

DR YOUNG:

So that's the work the local public health unit is doing with the people who are attending.

REPORTER:

Inaudible question

DR YOUNG:

The criteria today is there should only be a maximum of ten people at a funeral, now we are going to loosen that because other states interpreted that to mean ten mourners, we interpret it as being a total of ten. So going forward, we'll manage that as being ten mourners plus the funeral people that need to be there for the funeral to happen. Thank you.

[ENDS]

Engagement: Press conference

Speaker/s: Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk, Health Minister Steven Miles, Chief Health Officer Dr Jeannette Young and Mental Health Commissioner Ivan Frkovic

Airdate: 14 April 2020

Duration: 22 minutes

E&OE

PREMIER:

Alright morning everybody. Ok, so in some more good news overnight Queensland has had 11 new cases. So that's 35 over the Easter weekend, and 11 today, taking our total now to 998. And Steven Miles will give us some more advice on the numbers of people in ICU and the number of people who have recovered. So once again, a big thank you to Queensland for all the work that you have been doing in relation to flattening that curve. Well today I'd like to make an announcement about people who are at home and who may be feeling isolated and needing some extra help and support. So today I'm announcing that we are going to be allocating \$28 million to our non-government sector to help people who have mental health issues or who are facing drug and alcohol issues. This is very much needed at the moment. We've got a great non-government sector there right across Queensland that's willing, ready and able to help out and to lend a hand to people who are going through difficult times at the moment. So I really want to thank everyone for understanding during this time that things are very different, but there's a helping hand there for you when it's needed. So we'll have our Mental Health Commissioner who will be joining us today, who will say a few words about that, but I think this is a really good measure. It's about providing that support for people who are really doing it tough at the moment. And please, if you are feeling concerned, please reach out. We have a very strong non-government sector that is here to help you during this time. So, look, I'll hand over to Steven and then we'll hear from Dr Young and then we have our Mental Health Commissioner, Ivan, here to say a few words as well. Thanks, Steve.

MINISTER MILES:

Thanks so much, Premier. Of our 998 confirmed positive cases of COVID-19, just 11 are in intensive care units in our hospitals right across the state. That, along with that very low transmission rate, recorded over the weekend, makes Queensland the envy of the world when it comes to COVID-19 responses. If you compare our experience to other places around the world, Queensland and Queenslanders are doing very well. I want to thank all of the health staff who worked around the clock through the Easter weekend to keep us all safe. All of these results are a credit to them. And testing rates continued right through the weekend, so it's not the case that those low numbers at the weekend represent a reduction in testing. In fact, the broadening of the testing criteria has seen testing rates continue and a very, very low positive testing rate.

We know that the impact of this virus, and the measures that we have to put in place to prevent its spread won't just be physical. They will be mental and emotional too. And that's why this \$28 million COVID-19 mental health fund is going to be so crucial. It will support our non-government organisations to provide mental health services as well as drug and alcohol services to the most vulnerable in our community. Quarantine itself has an impact on people's mental health, of course grief does too, and many people will be seeing on the news what's happening in the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, places where they may have family and close friends, and just those images can have an impact on people's mental health, not to mention the impact of unemployment and business failure. And we do know that the economic impacts here are having a toll on people's jobs and on people's businesses and ultimately that can lead people to suffer from mental illness. So for all of those reasons that funding is just so vital. NGOs are now invited to apply for these grants to allow them to expand their services to support more people as they suffer from the mental impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

DR YOUNG:

Queenslanders have done a wonderful job over the weekend. They stayed at home, they didn't go out and we saw the results in the test numbers that we've had. That's great news. So we're seeing a steady reduction in the numbers of Queenslanders who are becoming infected with the COVID-19 virus. But we need to continue those processes. We need to continue to socially distance ourselves from one another, and that causes problems – we know it does, so it's great to see this extra support to the non-government sector to provide that assistance to people who are feeling it, who are developing mental health problems, who would like a bit of extra support. So please, if you need that support, you can always ring 13 Health, you can always access assistance. If you need help with anything else, with shopping or getting your medications because you're in quarantine, or you're older or vulnerable and you can't get out, you can also ring 13 Health and you can get that support. Red Cross has a process in place. This is a time that we all need to look out for each other and part of that is that we do maintain that social distancing, that we stay in our homes unless we really need to go out for essential purposes. So as we continue going forward, we will be reviewing all of what we're doing and we'll be working with the community as to what needs to happen. Thank you.

IVAN FRKOVIC:

Thank you. Can I just say that I welcome this announcement of \$28 million for the community mental health, drug and alcohol, and Indigenous primary healthcare sector. Thank you to the Government for making these funds available in these critical times. When it comes to mental health, we are all on spectrum of vulnerability. Whether we were well before this, whether we were vulnerable at the time or whether we were living with mental illness; the level of vulnerability has now spread to all of us. This is our opportunity to try and provide additional supports to people who are experiencing a whole range of psychological distress. And this is an opportunity to think about some of the symptoms and experiences that we may have which may be physical, cognitive, emotional or behavioural. This is an opportunity to provide services to these people to ensure that people can maintain a quality of life even through difficult times such as this. This initiative will focus on mental health, drug and alcohol services and indigenous primary health care services. Critically vital to

supporting our community. But what's more important – this compliments very nicely some of the Federal Government announcements around the MBS items, funding to Beyond Blue, etcetera. An opportunity for us to not only think about the physical distancing that's important but also the connections, the social connections which are vitally important in our society. And this particular measure will help people to manage better and come out the other end with much stronger mental health and ability to rebuild and to regain life control.

REPORTER:

Are you saying that even if you didn't suffer any sort of mental health issues before this you could [inaudible]?

IVAN FRKOVIC:

I didn't say mental health issues, I said a level of vulnerability. And so I think we all have shifted. For example, if you were working prior to this you were...60 per cent of the Australian population is well psychologically prior to this, but as a result of some of the things that have happened more recently your level of vulnerability may have increased just as a result, as what was said earlier by the Minister – losing a job, having a whole range of other problems, mortgage repayments, etcetera. These things place you in a level of vulnerability. But don't forget we already had people in the states of vulnerability before this who were unemployed, homeless, etcetera etcetera. But don't forget also, there's a lot of people who are living in our communities with mental illness and their families and carers who are now additionally under pressure in terms of the extra challenges we are experiencing as a society. So it's not just about mental illness, it's about a level of vulnerability.

REPORTER:

What kind of extra demand are you seeing?

IVAN FRKOVIC:

Seeing just general demand for services around supports and again, it's very hard to provide some of those supports. The physical supports. So a lot of agencies, and this funding will primarily assist them to move some of those services online, by phone, etcetera to be able to have the capacity. For example, we have some people who are living with mental illness who don't even have a mobile phone. How do we actually provide services to them, how do we do that. So there's a whole range of challenges that this money will be able to support in terms of providing supports particularly to families. There's a lot of older families, older Australians who are caring for older adult children with chronic mental illness. How do we also support them during this particular time.

REPORTER:

Can you detail a little more on how the money will be spent on services? You touched on phone and online, how will that work [inaudible]?

IVAN FRKOVIC:

It will be, as I think was said by the Minister, people will be able to express an interest to respond to increased demand. So for example, one of the major benefits of these funds is

about people being able to get supported in situ in community rather than needing to come to hospitals. We know that hospitals at the moment are doing to be...or are under a lot of pressure. So this is an opportunity to provide some of that psycho-social support, interventions. For some it might be just a general welfare check. There's a whole range of things we can do over the phone, video conferencing, etcetera, to be able to support people. To make sure their maintaining their medication. To make sure that they've got a relapse prevention plan if things are starting to unravel. Where do I need to go, who do I need to ring. All of those elements will be actually partially funded by the funds that were announced today.

REPORTER:

Premier, Victoria's just announced it's going to increase testing for the whole of state for anyone who has potential coronavirus symptoms. Is that a move that we're looking to?

PREMIER:

I might get Dr Young to address that but just before I finish can I just pick up on something that Ivan was saying and that is – I think now this is a really good time to reach out to family and friends and say “Are you ok, how are you doing?”. And if someone is concerned it is not too hard to go and ask for help. Now is the time because we've had so much upheaval. I think it's a really good time to check on your neighbours, check on your friends and family and just say “Are you ok, how are you doing?”. That's one little thing that we can all do to help one another. Now about the testing, I might get Dr Young to expand on that in a moment. But I just wanted to say that what we've already done is that we have actually expanded our testing to Cairns, Brisbane and the Gold Coast to anyone who has respiratory symptoms. We have done 74,013 tests right across Queensland which of course is a really good rate. So I might get Dr Young to address that issue.

DR YOUNG:

So last Monday I announced that due to some limited community transmission that Queensland would test anyone with respiratory symptoms in Gold Coast, Brisbane or Cairns. Now we haven't seen any other areas of the state with that degree of community transmission so at this stage we're not extending it to other parts of the state but were we to get increased cases elsewhere, of course we would.

REPORTER:

Can you give us an update on....

REPORTER:

What is the level of community transmission?

REPORTER:

Yeah, have that testing over the last week in those three areas shown that there is more community transmission?

DR YOUNG:

There were a couple more cases. So we're now up to 38. Last week we were at 33 so we've seen a few, less than a handful of additional cases due to that increased testing.

REPORTER:

So what does that say to you about the level of community transmission and the likelihood of it spreading in the future?

DR YOUNG:

At the moment in Queensland there's very limited community transmission. We're seeing a lot more in Sydney which is why I've asked that people who return from Sydney need to go into quarantine for 14 days and we've also seen an increase in community transmission down in Victoria which is why I'm sure they've announced their decision today.

REPORTER:

What can you tell us about a child care centre in Jimboomba, one I understand has been shut because a child [inaudible]?

DR YOUNG:

Um, that happened a while ago. So I think that was someone attended the first of April and the eighth of April. So I think that's all been resolved now.

REPORTER:

Premier I don't know if you have any details of this but this morning Commissioner Carroll said that there had been one person over the Easter long weekend that they've pinged three times for not staying in home detention, in home quarantine. Do you know anything about that and if you, in general what does that say to you?

PREMIER:

Well it's very rare that that's happening but people should not breach quarantine. Let me say it again, people should not breach quarantine because not only are you putting yourself at risk, you're putting other Queenslanders at risk. I know quarantine seems harsh but we have to do it. If we're going to slow the spread we have to follow the strict rules in terms of quarantine.

REPORTER

Premier, are you satisfied with teachings in the classroom and people also online [inaudible].

PREMIER:

I've got two sisters who are teachers, they actually welcomed the announcement yesterday, they're very prepared to do whatever it takes. They understand that their job is educators and I am very confident that the teachers in our state are extremely competent, they're going through uncharted territory as well, and I think it is wonderful to see that they have adapted so quickly to doing the online. And of course it will be up to the principals of each school to work out how to cater for those students that will be attending school.

REPORTER:

If I am working from home with my wife and I've got three children at school, what should they do? Should they go to school? I mean it's a lot of pressure in the household if they're learning online or...

PREMIER:

My understanding is that if there is a parent that is in the workplace, then the children can attend school. But I'll clarify that for you.

REPORTER:

You touched on it briefly yesterday, and the Education Minister did too about getting laptops to kids, how many laptops are you going to supply and where are you going to be getting them from? Surely [inaudible] aren't just sitting around?

PREMIER:

We're looking at SIM cards in the first instance. I know that Minister Grace is speaking with the Education Department about what other supports, and of course like I said, we're looking at ABC and the commercial networks also supporting delivering teaching lessons to students who don't have those. I think we're trying to cater for everyone here, I mean... I never thought I'd have to deal with anything like this in my lifetime, let alone what the people at home are going through, but we are adapting very quickly and I just want to thank everybody for their cooperation, and especially the school community and the parents that I know have a big job in making sure that their kids are sitting down and learning. But we don't want them to lose a year of school, so that is why we are doing everything we possibly can.

REPORTER:

Would you like to see National Cabinet extended once this is all over?

PREMIER:

National Cabinet? Is that in relation to the...

REPORTER:

To replace COAG.

PREMIER:

Yes, absolutely, I might address that because that is a really good question. What we have seen at the national level, unprecedented cooperation and decision making. I mean how many COAG meetings have we gone to and it just becomes people talking at each other. What we've seen from the National Cabinet, and once again I want to commend the way in which the Prime Minister is chairing the meetings, he is doing an outstanding job and bringing all the states together and listening. I think it is really important here, the Prime Minister is listening to the states and he is responding, and the level of cooperation is phenomenal. So why would you not capture that and keep that going into the future? I'd like to see it.

REPORTER:

Premier [inaudible]

PREMIER:

Can we all just put a hold on easing restrictions? Like I said, we are listening to the health advice, and the health advice is that we are trying to avoid what we're seeing in other countries happening here in Queensland. So we need to be listening to the health advice, and as we said, we are looking at six months and we will have to get very clear health advice about any easing of restrictions, and we don't want to give people false hope at the moment. So I think we've only just started this journey and Queensland is doing remarkably well, and the last thing I would want to see is a massive reduction which then sees a massive spike and we end up like other European countries. So, let's just take it week by week, and of course, we know that people are hurting economically, but fundamentally too, people do not want to get this virus. They want the health of their loved ones to be paramount, so it is a delicate balance in terms of the steps we need to go into the future. And as I said this morning, what we also need to be doing is watching some of those European countries that will be lifting some restrictions to see how that goes. And also too, I think some of the early evidence out of China is that there still is some community transmission. So, we've got to be... let's tread carefully here.

REPORTER:

You mentioned great cooperation with the federal government, how are you going with the Opposition here in Queensland? Is there that same level of cooperation?

PREMIER:

Well I know that Minister Miles will brief the Opposition – he has been – and Dr Young and Parliament will be resuming for a day next week and we'll be offering further briefings then as well.

REPORTER:

Do you know how many students are expected to [inaudible]?

PREMIER:

No, I am not quite sure but we can probably get you those details next week, when they go back. Happy to find that out for you.

REPORTER:

Sorry, Dr Young, can I just ask you a couple of questions for someone else. I understand there are some hand sanitisers being sold, alcohol free, how safe are they and should people be using them?

DR YOUNG:

People should always buy products that have been properly tested.

REPORTER:

So, alcohol-based [inaudible]?



DR YOUNG:

Yes

REPORTER:

And people are also trying to buy the testing kits online, I understand, is that advisable?

DR YOUNG:

Well the testing kits that you can buy online are the ones that look for antibodies, so they're pinprick – they look at a bit of blood – so they can sometimes tell you after you've been infected that you did have a COVID-19 infection. They're not particularly accurate, so there tend to be a lot of false negatives, so they're not a good idea at all. They're really for after the event. They can be useful if you want to do wide-spread population screening to see how much disease might have been in the population to try and work out what percentage of the population might be immune. So there's a use for them for that, but not for individual testing.

REPORTER:

Dr Young, can I just ask you about the community transmission again? So five extra cases of that, is that from one particular area?

DR YOUNG:

No, they were across Cairns, Brisbane and Gold Coast and there was one in a regional area as well. So there's only just the one case in each, so it is not anything really significant.

REPORTER:

And until we get on top of that, I guess talk of easing restrictions [inaudible] does that seem ridiculous until you get on top of that community...

DR YOUNG:

While you've still got cases – whether they be community or due to contacts – that means you've got spread going on, so it would be very hard to lift restrictions because then you'd have increased spread.

PREMIER:

Okay, last one for Lydia and then we've got to get going.

REPORTER:

Some community leaders, such as [inaudible] are calling for more detailed testing to be released, some rumours are spreading, so it is not just HHS [inaudible], is that something the department is considering?

MINISTER MILES:

It is something we're working on, obviously we've had to put in place data management processes, and that is taking some time, but it is our hope to be able to provide at least local government area level data, and where there are higher numbers of cases in a local



government area, to provide that by suburb. We are working on that and hope to have it available shortly.

[ENDS]

Released under RTI - DPC

Engagement: Press conference

Speaker/s: Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk, Health Minister Steven Miles and Chief Health Officer Dr Jeannette Young

Airdate: 15 April 2020

Duration: xx minutes

E&OE

PREMIER:

In further good news for Queensland, I can report that we've only had five additional cases overnight and this is the lowest from about the 10th of March, so this is extraordinary result. It is great news, and come on Queensland, lets keep it up, lets keep flattening that curve. Our numbers were revised down yesterday, so our new total is now 999. So once again, I just really want to congratulate Queenslanders for the great effort that they're putting in. But like I said, we're not out of the woods yet so we've got to keep it up. We've had 75,480 tests across Queensland and today I want to talk about our new Queensland paramedics. So we've already met a few of them today – and welcome to Parliament House – and it is such an admirable profession and I am really pleased that we will be adding an extra 60 graduating paramedics right across Queensland. This is fantastic news, on top of the extra 45 we've recently deployed as well. So for example, Cairns will be getting an additional four, Darling Downs three, Gold Coast eight, Metro North 17, Metro South 12, Townsville two, Sunshine Coast six, West Moreton six, Wide Bay two. So this additional reinforcements that we need, the graduates will be out on the ground helping people and once again it is making sure that we have the frontline services that we need to combat COVID-19. So with those few words, I will hand over to Minister Miles and then we'll hear from Dr Young, and of course our State Disaster Coordinator.

MINISTER MILES:

As the Premier indicated, five overnight is our lowest total since early March. You'll recall that we very quickly went from those low numbers in early March to a peak of 78 on the 24th of March, so to have suppressed that daily increase rate to five is a fantastic result and is a credit to all Queenslanders who have complied with those social distancing restrictions that we've put in place. Of those 999 positive cases, 442 are now confirmed to have recovered, leaving us with 552 active cases of COVID-19 in Queensland right now. Of those, 23 are in hospital, 11 are in intensive care and 10 are currently ventilated. We completed 1424 COVID-19 tests in the last 24 hours, which when taken into account, the five positive cases are a very low positive test case rate for the last 24 hours, and is a very strong result. A concerning number of the positive tests coming through are from those people who have travelled interstate and so we would reemphasise the importance of those domestic border travel restrictions. Nobody is above or beyond those restrictions, and if it is not essential you should not be travelling to other states. Today is a fantastic announcement, just because our social distancing efforts have been so effective at restricting the spread of COVID-19, doesn't

mean we have taken our foot off the accelerator in terms of our health preparations. Things can change very quickly and it is important that we ensure all of those plans we put in place to get our health system ready continue to be activated. And one of those is enhancing our paramedic – our first responder workforce. We committed to have more than 100 extra paramedics, and today I can confirm that 45 have already started work, 30 started training this week and 30 more will start their training next week, putting 105 extra ambos on the road to respond to COVID-19 cases as well as everything else that is happening in the community – heart attacks and strokes, the flu – all of the other illnesses that keep our ambos busy through the winter season. We have also appointed 15 additional communication centre staff. All up, 120 extra QAS staff able to respond more quickly to the communities needs. They are all undertaking an accelerated training and induction program, meaning we can get them from appointment – or from starting – out on to the road in just three weeks. And we’ve got here with us today Chris and Harriet who are two of those paramedics who started this week, we are very proud to have them and their colleagues on board.

DR YOUNG:

Thank you to all of those Queenslanders who’ve listened to the advice and are following it very, very carefully. And we can see that it has worked in the numbers overnight. So five new cases across Queensland is excellent news. One area I am getting a little bit concerned about is the increasing number of cases acquired interstate, so today we now have 17 Queenslanders who acquired their COVID-19 infection from having travelled interstate, and then return to Queensland. So, it is really, really important if you don’t need to leave your own community, please don’t, and definitely don’t travel interstate, and if you do travel interstate, in most cases you will be required to go into quarantine for 14 days on return. And that is important, we’ve seen that now in the case numbers. We’ve not seen increased local transmission here in Queensland, with one additional case overnight, so we’re now at 39. So that’s really good news, so we’re not seeing transmission locally. We’ve had some cases, as you’re aware in Cairns, in the Gold Coast and in Brisbane, and we’re doing a lot of additional testing in those places but we’ve not seen increased cases, which is really good news. So, everyone, unfortunately we need to continue to adhere to these very tough restrictions going forward, because we know that if we don’t, we’ll see a rapid increase in case numbers.

STEVE GOLLSCHESKI:

Good morning, if I could just run you through some things that have been happening at our borders and with the compliance regime we’re putting in place to ensure that the Chief Health Officer’s directions are complied with. Since we started the border controls at our airports on the 15th of April, we’ve seen 2405 people coming through international borders placed in quarantine, including 144 yesterday. At our domestic airports, we’ve processed 15,221 persons, of which 2911 have been placed into quarantine, including 24 yesterday. At our road borders we’ve intercepted 85,517 vehicles, of those 3264 have been given quarantine notices, including 34 Queenslanders returning from a hotspot. Yesterday we saw 53 given quarantine notice and three coming from the hotspot. In our enforcement regime, where we are writing out tickets and I know that creates some interest, there has been 884 penalty infringement notices issued since the start of our campaign in this space. I really have to say the vast majority of Queenslanders are listening to the messaging and are doing the right thing – the

vast majority of Queenslanders. In many instances, our police are intersecting with the community in simply providing advice to them around what they need to do in order to comply with directions. In fact, we ran an operation over Easter on the M1 where 260 vehicles were intercepted – actually it was more vehicles intercepted than that – but 260 vehicles were turned around because they didn't have an essential purpose to travel, not one person was given a ticket. They were all compliant and understood what was required of them and being given that opportunity to comply, they were able to do that. However, what we do see is that sometimes people just wilfully, or recklessly don't comply with the directions and we have to take action, hence those 884 tickets since we started. Overall, I have to say thank you to the community because they are working with us, the Commissioner is very intent that we, as a police service, with our community to make sure that the quarantine works. This is not a policing regime, it is about making sure our community is kept safe from the spread of COVID-19.

REPORTER:

Steve, just before you go, I understand the operation on the south-bound lanes are continuing since Easter with rego recognition. How much longer will that be?

STEVE GOLLSCHEWSKI:

We're still... there is not change to the current quarantine regime, we will keep that going as long as we believe that we need to make sure that there needs to be compliance with the Chief Health Officer's directions. What we are seeing is broad compliance, but there are some people that for various reasons are either wilfully disobeying it – so we will take action – or those that simply have not understood it correctly, so we will continue to educate those people.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] that police are monitoring funerals? We've had a call at the ABC this morning saying that at a funeral for a relative, they had Polair over the top of them, is that true/

STEVE GOLLSCHEWSKI:

I am not aware of us specifically targeting or monitoring funerals. Polair is in the air a fair bit, whether that was coincidental or not, I don't know. I am certainly not aware of anything of the type.

REPORTER:

Are you able to touch on soldiers up in Townsville who were fined?

STEVE GOLLSCHEWSKI:

Same with any other member of the community, including all of us that work in government, if people don't comply with the Chief Health Officers, we will investigate and take action if appropriate. The ADF and Queensland Police and Queensland Government have a wonderful relationship, so we work very well with the ADF. I am sure they have processes in place, as has been reported, and we will look into that and take appropriate action.

REPORTER:

How many were fined?

STEVE GOLLSCHESKI:

Look, I can't answer that off the top of my head sorry.

REPORTER:

Premier, can I ask you some questions about schools please?

PREMIER:

Yeah sure,

REPORTER:

What do you make of the Prime Minister's comments that schools should remain open, that any parent that wants to send their kids to a school should be able to?

PREMIER:

Ah look, in terms of what we announced there was support for that position. I took that position to the previous National Cabinet and I think if you at what the Prime Minister said – schools are open, teachers are at the schools... will be at the schools in Queensland and they are open for students of essential workers and they're also open for vulnerable students and I think we've got that mix right in Queensland.

REPORTER:

Should other parents send their children to school? If their not worker, say stay at home mums, should they send their kids to school?

PREMIER:

Not at this stage. So we said very clearly yesterday that we would review the situation by the 15th of May to give parents clarity halfway through the second term so I think that is a responsible measure to take. And we have talked about this at length and I'm very comfortable with the position that Queensland is taking in relation to return to school next week.

REPORTER:

Was there health advice to close schools?

PREMIER:

National Cabinet considered that the school should be open to students of essential workers.

REPORTER:

Was that [inaudible]?

PREMIER:

Of course



REPORTER:

And to check – when you say essential workers....

PREMIER:

Anybody who is...I should clarify that. Anyone who is in the workforce is considered an essential worker.

REPORTER:

And that includes parents who are working from home now as well?

PREMIER:

They should talk to their principal and principals can give that advice

REPORTER:

So there's a bit of latitude, like for example you've got three kids at home and you're working full time at home as well?

PREMIER:

They should talk to their principal about whether or not they can continue to supervise at home.

REPORTER:

Premier, what is it about the National Cabinet model that you like? Would you prefer to see that taking the place of COAG [inaudible]?

PREMIER:

Look I addressed that yesterday and I said very clearly that I'm of course very comfortable with the National Cabinet continuing in its current situation. I think Australians and Queenslanders have seen the National Cabinet working very well together and making decisions.

REPORTER:

Do you have any update on the Queenslanders stuck in Perth?

PREMIER:

Yes, so I might get the State Disaster Coordinator to comment on that but we are in discussions with the Western Australian Government about organising for the Queenslanders that are in Perth to come back to Queensland.

REPORTER:

You'll arrange commercial flights?

PREMIER:

We're looking at all options.

REPORTER:

Just about schools again – we’ve had some parents who have contacted us as well saying they’re concerned that the quality of education that they are giving to their children at home won’t be the same standard as if their kids were being taught at school. What words can you give to those parents?

PREMIER:

Look I just want to say to parents these are unprecedented times and as we know, we still have coronavirus cases in Queensland. So I’m asking everyone for their patience. I’m asking everyone for their cooperation at this time. And as the health advice, if we get health advice that changes we will update the community. So once again, we’ve made a very clear decision about schools opening next week for term two and they’ll be reviewed halfway through term two. I can’t be any clearer than that.

REPORTER:

And the actual way that it’s going to happen for students, will that vary from school to school? So some might be given classes over Zoom for example, some might do worksheets...

PREMIER:

Yeah correct. I mean that’s up to each individual. Yeah but there’s a curriculum out there that teachers know that they have to follow but the way in which they deliver those lessons, they can be creative.

REPORTER:

What will happen I guess if a lot of students turn up and they can’t fit in one classroom due to social distancing laws?

PREMIER:

I doubt that will happen.

REPORTER:

Premier, sorry this is a fun one. People have been making bread at home and binge watching Tiger King. We’ve had some people ask what you’re doing when you’re not at work...

PREMIER:

I’m usually working

REPORTER:

No fun TV shows? No bread making for you?

PREMIER:

No, a little bit of gardening, that’s about it. I might hand over to the State Disaster Coordinator just to answer that question about Perth, is that alright?

STEVE GOLLSCHEWSKI:

Yes certainly. Sorry who asked that question?

REPORTER:

Do you have an update on the Queenslanders still stuck in Perth?

STEVE GOLLSCHEWSKI:

Yeah look what's happening nationally is that we're seeing people come out of the quarantine within states when they've come from overseas. So there is that mandated quarantine when you return from overseas. We're working nationally to make sure we can repatriate people between states because of the reduced number of flights that are happening, it's quite challenging. I'm in contact with Western Australia at the moment getting confirmed figures about how many people are over there and we're working through it. This is a challenging time. Everyday we get a new challenge of something we have to try and solve and that's one of the issues that we're really concentrating at the moment so we'll get you updated as soon as we get some more information.

REPORTER:

Do those people have to take a level of responsibility? They went travelling in a time when the world was talking about coronavirus, when the Prime Minister had already said don't go travelling and if you are overseas come back. Do they have to take a level of responsibility that they can't get back to Queensland now?

STEVE GOLLSCHEWSKI:

Look we always work with the people that are involved and generally speaking, people are fairly resourceful but if there's simply no planes flying at the time from Western Australia it's a long way to come. So we will work with them and always we will help our community and always we will help Queenslanders get back to Queensland so that's what we're doing.

REPORTER:

Has New South Wales flown their residents back, do you know?

STEVE GOLLSCHEWSKI:

Ah off the top of my head, I know there's been some repatriation going on but there's challenges between all the states, not the Western Australia and Queensland.

REPORTER:

Can I ask a question to the Minister?

PREMIER:

Yep, last one Lydia.

REPORTER:

It won't be about Tiger King.

MINISTER MILES:

We finished Tiger King last night at my house. The after show was a bit disappointing.

REPORTER:

Can you just touch on elective surgeries please?

MINISTER MILES:

Yeah sure. So we have a high level taskforce within Queensland Health including representatives from our hospital and health services determining how and what elective surgeries and screenings can recommence. We suspended all non-urgent elective surgery on the expectation that we would see that accelerated number of COVID-19 cases. But thanks to the efforts of Queenslanders we haven't. a very low number of people in our hospitals, just 24 so that means that there is scope for us to recommence more urgent, more debilitating...surgeries for more debilitating illnesses as well as screenings for those cancers and other diseases which if we identify them early we can increase the chance of people surviving. And so we don't want to see Queensland women dying of breast cancer because they weren't breast screened through this pandemic and so wherever possible and wherever safe our hospitals will work hard to deliver those services. And as I say, we have people working on a plan to do that now.

REPORTER:

So it that like category two or three that will be starting again?

MINISTER MILES:

The priority will be those...so all category one surgeries are considered urgent and are proceeding as planned. Category two though, we will be working through the most urgent, the most painful, the most debilitating illnesses and prioritising those. As well as screening – so I mentioned breast screen but endoscopies, that kind of work that can proceed. The primary limiting factor on that is ensuring that we maintain sufficient stockpiles of protective equipment and so that's the balance there. As we get more confident in our supply of protective equipment the more we can expand elective surgeries.

PREMIER:

Alright, thank you.

[ENDS]

Engagement: Press conference

Speaker/s: Health Minister Steven Miles and Chief Health Officer Dr Jeannette Young

Airdate: 16 April 2020

Duration: 13 minutes 50 seconds

E&OE

MINISTER MILES:

Well we're able to provide another update on the COVID-19 effort here in Queensland, and it's another great result. Just five positive tests confirmed overnight and, in the meantime, we also identified 3 cases in yesterday's data which were not positives. So the total increase is just 2, bringing Queensland's total number of positive cases of COVID-19 to 1001. Just over 1000. We have now tested 73,868 Queenslanders. In just the last 24 hours, we tested nearly 2200 – so we're maintaining that very high testing rate even though we're now having a much lower number of positive cases. That rate of positive cases continues to be very low. There are just 21 COVID-19 patients in hospital, 11 of them still in ICU, now only 9 of them ventilated. Of our cases, just 39 relate to confirmed local transmission and 18 from those who have travelled from inter-state. The vast bulk of cases continue to be people who've travelled overseas, returning from overseas, confirming that ongoing trend. But of course I'll ask the Chief Health Officer to add to that.

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

So it's excellent news that we've seen only 5 new cases overnight. And that shows that the strategies in place are working and that Queenslanders have heard the message and are minimising the amount of contact they have with other people, and minimising the time that they spend outside their own home and their own community. So that is really good news. We are seeing a slow increase in the numbers of cases acquired inter-state, so it's really important that people manage that and that people don't travel inter-state unless they really do need to. And we do expect that there will probably be some increase cases because of the numbers of people returning from overseas. So there've been a number of flights organised to assist Australians to return to Australia. So we will be working very, very closely with those groups of people when they return into Queensland.

REPORTER:

Are we over the worst of it?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Unfortunately not. At this stage, our strategies have been very, very successful at minimising the numbers of Queenslanders who've contracted the infection. We know that that will continue, and we will continue to have to do the work that we've got in place. So no, we're not over the worst of it. We know that eventually we will see larger numbers of cases, but,

because of the work that's been done today, we know that our health system here in Queensland will be able to cope with those larger numbers of cases and provide the care that every single person needs.

REPORTER:

Can you explain why to parents about the danger of reopening schools? A lot of parents are saying, we're seeing these low numbers, there's not that huge community transmission. Some of them are wondering what is the medical reason [inaudible]?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

It is really important that in every aspect of society we minimise contact and minimise the opportunity for this virus to spread. So that's in everything that we do, and schools play their part. So I know it must be extraordinarily difficult for parents at home trying to supervise their children and for their children to continue to get an education, but our education system in Queensland has responded very, very promptly to put lessons online and to continue that learning. And we have that in place. So decision has been made that schools will remain open for the children of essential workers and for vulnerable children for the next five weeks, during which time we'll be able to review the impact of all of the strategies that have been put in place today and see whether there can be changes to any of those strategies.

REPORTER:

With the cases that you said you expected the numbers would be worse, can you explain why that is because if we don't have community transmission, we don't have extensive community transmission here in Queensland, and the restrictions stay in place, how is it then that the numbers are going to get worse?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

The numbers will get worse because of those people returning from overseas. That's the group that I'm concerned about. And that's why it's really, really important that those people returning from overseas, who I know have been extremely traumatised about what has happened to them, that's why we need them to quarantine in those hotels in the airport and be given all the support there. We have seen a number of those people already test positive, and systems are being put in place to support them. That's where I'm concerned about those increased numbers. So I'm just saying we are expecting larger numbers to return from overseas, because, in many ways, this is their last chance to do that, because as we all know that flights are being cancelled every single day around the world. So for these people they're going to have to return now if they wish to return to Australia.

REPORTER:

So given they're going to go into hotels, are you talking about that as more of an impact on the health system rather than they're going to spread it?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

They won't be spreading it because of that requirement that they go into that quarantine in hotels. But I know that that is very, very difficult for a lot of those people, and I'm very

grateful to those people that they're prepared to spend that two additional weeks, to everything else that's gone before that, to stay in hotels. We know that that's where our cases have come from. So we've had over 700 cases out of our 1000 from people who contracted the infection overseas, and then we've had a further additional 160 cases, most of those because they've contracted it from someone who contracted it overseas. That's why we need those people to go into that hotel accommodation.

REPORTER:

Of those people who have contracted it inter-state, we understand that they're [inaudible] do you have details?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

No, we've not seen that. We've had 18 and they've actually returned across the state. So we've had 2 or 3 in each location. We haven't had a large group return to one location.

REPORTER:

And for people out west, for example, or in areas where there isn't a lot of coronavirus cases or there hasn't been any positive cases for quite a while, what is the risk of easing restrictions in those areas?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

That's part of the work that we're currently going through at the moment, looking at all of the strategies that have been put in place and then trying to work out whether it's possible to review any of those.

REPORTER:

So because Queensland is decentralised are you saying that we might see places open up, particularly towns open up, before south east Queensland?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Not at this stage. At this stage we need to really continue all of our measures across the state. But that's of course one of the things that we'll possibly be looking at down the track.

REPORTER:

Do you have something to say to Queenslanders about when – I know this is a little while away [inaudible] but for example, would we need to see three weeks where there's no new case? Like what's... to give people an idea of what we're looking for, what you're looking for before we [inaudible]?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

That's a very, very important question and it's one that the National Cabinet is actually considering today.

REPORTER:

So we don't have any advice [inaudible]?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

No. No, we don't. We're part of the national response and we're following those protocols and that advice and that's what we've put in place in Queensland, but we are doing some additional work to look at what things we could possibly consider going forward.

REPORTER:

Can [inaudible] Professor Brendan Murphy [inaudible] said that there'd never been a recommendation for those schools in some states... he was worried that some states were doing it out of [inaudible] care not from a health recommendation. What's your response to that?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

I gave that response earlier. In Queensland we have right from the start looked at all the initiatives that we could put in place to limit the spread of this new coronavirus, and schools were a very, very important part of that. Now that we've seen a substantial reduction in cases, we can go and review all of those initiatives and work out which ones we might be able to adjust. But it's really important that we needed every part of society to work through and respond and that's what's absolutely happened in Queensland.

REPORTER:

Dr Young, do you have any details on a student at Ashmore State School testing positive for COVID-19, and is it correct that the principal has also shown symptoms?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

No, I don't have any details on that.

REPORTER:

Yesterday you were talking about those people who were stuck in Perth and [inaudible] trying to get them home. Can you give an update on that? Is it Queensland Health that's taking the lead on that?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

No, Police are taking the lead on that, and I understand they've managed to negotiate something and it will be sorted fairly soon.

REPORTER:

So you know when they are coming home?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

No, that's Queensland Police have done that, and they would have that information. I understand they're still working through all the details at the moment.

REPORTER:

Some parents are considering whether grandparents can fill that role of helping them with home schooling, do you have any... would you say something about the danger of that?

DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

It's really important that those people who are more vulnerable to getting adverse outcomes if they become infected, that they do remain at home whenever possible and don't have interaction with younger people in particular, because younger people don't always understand those social distancing requirements. So those groups are people who are aged 65 years or older with one or more chronic disease, particularly uncontrolled hypertension or diabetes, lung or heart disease or kidney disease, then anyone aged 70 years or older with or without chronic disease are at increased risk, and then any of our First Nations people who are aged 50 years or older with one or more chronic diseases.

REPORTER:

Last year there were some problems with the hospital ordering system. Have you experienced anything like that [inaudible]?

MINISTER MILES:

The distribution centres in Brisbane and Townsville have done a fantastic job, making sure that all of our hospitals have the equipment that they need.

REPORTER:

Can you say something to Queenslanders who might be looking at these figures and going, alright, we've got it under control, why can't we open things back up again?

MINISTER MILES:

My message to Queenslanders is that if we manage to keep this up then we will be able to go back to normal eventually, but we need to keep it up for quite some time. We've indicated that some of the restrictions will be reviewed, for example, in five weeks' time. Those considerations are all ongoing. The National Cabinet is meeting right now and having some discussions, I understand, about those kinds of things. No doubt the Prime Minister will talk to the nation about that this afternoon. But my message to Queenslanders really is that this is working really well, but now's now the time to stop. Let's keep it up and keep ourselves safe.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] back from Nepal, the Australian and New Zealand tourists [inaudible] today. What arrangements are in place to get them back to their home states or back to New Zealand?

MINISTER MILES:

Are you able to address that, Jeannette? Or... The police have lead on that through the SDCG so you'll be better off putting those questions to them. Sorry.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]



DR JEANNETTE YOUNG:

Well, we're not sure which planes actually... we get told which ones might come, but until they've actually come we're not sure. So we'll get information on that every day [inaudible].

MINISTER MILES:

Very good. Thank you.

[ENDS]

Released under RTI - DPC

Engagement: Press conference

Speaker/s: Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk, Minister Anthony Lynham, Cecile Wake – Arrow Energy, Minister Steven Miles, Chief Health Officer Dr Jeanette Young

Date: 17 April 2020

Duration: 33 minutes

E&OE

PREMIER:

.... bringing our total to 1007 and of course more than 77,700 tests have been conducted right across Queensland and we'll hear more from Minister Miles and Dr Young in a moment. But today of course we know we're dealing with this twin crisis of health and also what's happening with the economy. And what we really need to do is we really need to focus on those projects we can get up and running in Queensland so I've asked all of my Ministers to come up with an accelerated works program. Looking at both private sector and the public sector. We really need to make sure when we come through this that we are powering Queensland forward into the future and creating as many jobs as we can because we know how important jobs are to people. And I understand there are a lot of people out there hurting at the moment. So today, excellent news. I'm going to be joined by Cecile from Arrow Energy and Arrow Energy will today confirm its commitment to a \$10 billion Surat gas project in Southern Queensland. This is fantastic news for Queensland. This project...this \$10 billion project the likes of which we have not seen it since 2011 so, this gas project will be 800 jobs in construction, 200 ongoing. The first phase will mean 200 jobs and we should see people out in the field around August, September this year. So, I really want to thank Arrow Energy. This is wonderful news, just what Queensland needs during this time and like I said, this \$10 billion-dollar injection into the Queensland economy is the shot in the arm that we all need. So, I hand over to Dr Lynham to say a few words and he will talk to you in more detail about what this means in terms of the quantity of petajoules and then we will hear from Cecile from Arrow Energy.

DR LYNHAM:

As we are surrounded by coronavirus news, it is great to have some good news and look towards recovery. I'm here today as the Premier said with the CEO of Arrow Energy, Cecile Wake, and Cecile will provide further details on this project. But, I am pleased to stand here with the Premier and Cecile, to announce this \$10 billion project. 5000 petajoules of gas. That's enough gas to power Toowoomba for 5000 years. That's how big this project is. This comes at no better time, a huge capital investment for Queensland at a time when we need it the most. As the Premier said, this is the biggest gas project this state has seen since 2011. It's good news for jobs in the regions. It's also good news for companies supplying Arrow Energy in the region. As the Premier said, 200 jobs virtually straightaway in Dalby and

Wandoan. That's 200 pay packets for families and families buying goods in businesses in those towns. In the past decade, the gas injury has provided \$1 billion to the Queensland economy. And to this day, we have 8000 jobs still supported by the gas sector. Now our gas, now more than ever, is vital. It's supplying gas to manufacturers to make PPE, supplying gas to hospitals, to our homes. Our resources sector is weathering at the coronavirus storm far better than any other sector. Companies, workers, workers' representatives, regional communities - they have all stepped up. They have changed work practices. They have social distancing, have extra hygiene, we have seen a decrease in FIFO numbers with more workers into our regional communities. This is good news and I like to congratulate the resources sector, and everybody associated with it for the work they have done during these difficult times. Now, Cecile she'll provide some details regarding Arrow Energy in this time and I would ask Cecile now if you'll provide those details. Thanks Cecile.

CECILE WAKE:

Thank you Premier and Minister for this great opportunity to join you in the beautiful grounds of Parliament House today. I'm absolutely delighted to be able to join with you to announce the decision by Arrow's shareholders to take a final investment decision on phase one of the gas project. This investment decision made during the week by Arrow and its shareholders is a significant vote of confidence, not just in the Surat gas project but in Queensland and Australian businesses in a really challenging time. We are committed to Queensland and to bringing Arrow's outstanding natural gas to market. Arrow and its shareholders, Shell, and PetroChina, really proud to be paying a part now in the economic recovery from COVID-19. More than that, we know in the years to come that the benefits of this investment will be shared by Arrow and all of our stakeholders across Queensland over the full 27 year life of the gas project. These benefits will come through more gas for domestic and export markets, through more jobs and contracting opportunities here in Queensland and through more long-term operational roles in our regional communities. As the Premier and Minister Lynham have said, over the full life of the project, over 800 jobs in construction and 200 long-term operational jobs in the regions. The first 200 of those will come with this exciting phase one of the project. At the heart of the Surat gas project and this investment decision lies really genuine collaboration. Collaboration with the State Government who's support and assistance we appreciate. Collaboration with the Shell operated QGC joint-venture, to put in place an innovative suite of infrastructure, sharing and gas sales agreement that will see more gas brought to market faster and more efficiently by avoiding duplication of infrastructure, reducing capex and development risks and importantly, reducing community and environmental impacts. And vitally, collaboration with our landowners and our regional councils. To find unique ways of working together, of coexisting side-by-side as we develop our gas resources and they protect Queensland's world class black soil farming land. Coexistence for two great thriving industries here in Queensland. Today's announcement belongs to them as well. In these challenging COVID-19 times, Arrow remains absolutely committed to safely and responsibly executing our base business and developing the Surat gas project to protect the health and well-being of all of our people and vitally, of the regional communities where we operate. Already today, Arrow has reduced by some 30 per cent the number of FIFO workers travelling to our regional sites. We have chartered private flights for them. We have introduced additional health measures, mobile camps. We have put on new nurses and health checks. Our workers, FIFO and local,

are doing an outstanding job to keep our operations running, to keep gas flowing in Queensland and to do that safely and responsibly with the community where they live and operate. We thank them for their commitment in this time. Arrow and its shareholders are absolutely delighted to be bringing more Queensland gas to market. To be investing in Queensland and Australia today. Thank you very much.

REPORTER:

What is stage one?

CECILE WAKE:

The Surat gas project is a 27-year development that ultimately over the life of it, will produce around 5TCF of gas. Stage one – it's a phase development – will comprise around 600 wells, infrastructure to connect to the QGC existing infrastructure, upgrades of many of our gas and water handling facilities.

REPORTER:

So, it's the pre-work? It's the pre-work phase?

CECILE WAKE:

No, it's absolutely starting yeah.

REPORTER:

And the green light was actually given by the State Government more than a year ago. In February last year you were given the green light to go ahead with this. Why has it taken more than a year for shareholders to actually go ahead with it?

CECILE WAKE:

Yeah, great question. As I indicated, this is genuinely a collaboration effort. We put a gas sales agreement in place and infrastructure sharing in 2017. We got the green light from Government and the grant of our petroleum leases. All really necessary pre-conditions to investment. We've also had to put in a very complex suite of collaboration agreements. Genuine collaboration takes time. We want to have enduring benefits not just for Arrow and its shareholders, but for all of the participants in this project.

REPORTER:

How soon will we see gas being produced and how much will be exported and how much will the domestic market will get?

CECILE WAKE:

Ok, I'll take the first part of that question first. Construction is commencing this year. As the Premier said, we should see the first physical activities out in the site by August/September. First gas is anticipated in 2021. So one of the advantages of this collaboration, while it took a little bit longer to get to the investment decision is that we're able to bring that gas to market faster and more effectively.

In terms of the gas between export and the domestic markets, in order to access this collaboration benefits, we are processing this gas through QGC joint venture facilities and the gases being sold under a 27 year gas sales agreement to QGC. QGC will continue to support both domestic and export markets, what I can say is that Arrow currently produces 150 terajoules of gas a day that it supplies to the domestic market. We'll be continuing with those supplier arrangements and indeed as recently as last month, we entered into a new gas supplier agreement with a business just outside Dalby to set them on their path to growth.

PREMIER:

Any more questions on this topic?

Ok, we will hand over to now Steven and then Dr Young.

MINISTER MILES:

Thank you Premier. Those additional six Queenslanders diagnosed with Covid-19 yesterday bring us to a total of 1,007 positive cases in the 79 days since our first case and we find ourselves in a better position than we thought possible. Our doubling rate is now every 40 days, that peaked at less than every 3 days. The national doubling rate is now every 30 days, so Queensland is ahead of that national average. We have just 19 Covid-19 patients in our hospitals, still eleven in intensive care. 9 of those are being ventilated. In the last 24 hours, Queensland tested 2,503 people. To put that context, the national testing rate is less than 5,000 a day. Queensland is testing roughly 50% of that national testing rate and Queenslanders should be very proud of their health service and the way that it has responded to this pandemic. It is still the case that only 39 of those cases are community transmission with no known link. One of the six cases relates to a worker in the pathology service in Cairns. They are a known contact of another confirmed case and so it is thought very unlikely that they contracted Covid-19 at work, however, they are now in isolation. The staff of the service who would have been in contact with them are now in quarantine. The lab is winding down for a deep clean. We have sent a public health physician from Brisbane to Cairns. In the meantime, testing for Cairns can be done at the private providers there as well as in Townsville and in Brisbane. That deep clean could see the lab closed for approximately 48 hours. In the meantime, we will deploy a team of staff from Brisbane to relief those who won't be required to quarantine. I think this underlines though first of all our health workers make up a big part of our states population and they are out and about in our community just as we all are and it shouldn't surprise us that some of them will contract this virus, however, it is also a reminder that the heroes of this effort are not just the doctors and nurses. They are often the frontline, the most visible face but it's the scientists, the pathology workers, the cleaners who will clean this lab who are all so vital to this effort and I want to thank them for all of their work.

DR YOUNG:

So another tremendous result for Queenslanders today. Queenslanders are adhering to messages and our request for everyone to minimise their exposure to other people and stay home wherever possible. As a result of all that work, we had six confirmed cases overnight. One of those cases was a laboratory worker who works in the Cairns laboratory in the Cairns Hospital. It is thought they probably contracted it from another person who had visited that

laboratory but we're just working through all the details of that at the moment. We think its very, very unlikely that they contracted via their work with any specimens. We think it was contact with another person. So there is no risk to any of the patients at the Cairns Hospital or to any of the staff at the hospital. This is confined to the laboratory so overnight a lot of work was done by the Cairns Hospital and Health Service to work through who had been in that pathology laboratory and they're all being tested this morning and we'll get those results in the next 24 hours to see whether anyone else has contracted the infection. They'll then be all required to go into 14 days of quarantine and during that period, we'll be organising to staff the laboratory with staff from elsewhere in the state. We know that we've got a very strong pathology system that can do that. There are two private laboratories in Cairns: QML and SNP to do any testing that is needed for the hospital that can't be sent down to either Townsville or Brisbane. So that's all in place. This was a very rapid response by the hospital and health service in Cairns. Thank you.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] what came out of National Cabinet yesterday and what the plan is for Queensland going forward, if we could start with restrictions, so the Prime Minister said four weeks and then things might be reconsidered, but he said states would have liberty if they had put in above and beyond what was recommended at the national level to wind some of those restrictions back. What is being considered here?

PREMIER:

We only just discussed that yesterday, so of course we will now go and have a look, but it depends, essentially, on how Queensland goes over the next month. I mean, what we need to be very careful about here, and let me make it very clear, that we do not want to see those massive spikes that we saw in European countries and in the United States where there was massive spikes and large numbers of deaths. So anything we will do, we will do so absolutely in the best interests of Queenslanders health.

REPORTER:

And what sort of milestones are you looking out for? Is it like two weeks of no confirmed cases, or...?

PREMIER:

We will now go and work through all of that, but of course, it is going to depend on the rate of new cases, where they're coming from. But also too, the rate of community transmission and of course what areas that may impact on as well. So the last thing we need is, for example, what has happened in Tasmania where two hospitals have been closed, so I am just saying to Queenslanders that we have your best interests at heart, I know these are tough times but we have to take this as a day by day, week by week, month by month proposition. And of course, we need to get that balance right, and I think the Prime Minister and others have described it as like walking a tightrope, so it is going to be very careful how we tread now and into the future, but these results are very encouraging.

REPORTER:

Sorry Premier, what about things like beaches, national parks and some of those areas that presumably aren't as dangerous as confined space? [inaudible]

PREMIER:

Lane, we will be looking at a number of options, but I don't want to give anyone any false hope at the moment, so we'll be doing that work over the next month, and of course, anything like that will need time to evaluate the effectiveness and the results that that would cause as well. So I am please asking Queenslanders to stay with us on this course for the next month, and then we'll see where we go. But also too, I will be looking very closely at the regions, our regional responses as well, and because Queensland is such a big state, I don't think we can treat the state as a whole during this pandemic.

REPORTER:

There must be regional towns, certainly out west, where there are no cases?

PREMIER:

Correct, that is not to say that they won't get one but we will be taking into all of those considerations.

REPORTER:

So, for example, can you talk us through what might be on the table?

PREMIER:

No, I am not going to talk through hypotheticals, please just give us the time to do the work. It would be negligent of me to do that today.

REPORTER:

Premier, [inaudible] drop in cases, do you think we have the balance right then between our health and keeping our economy ticking? Have we got that balance?

PREMIER:

This is a marathon, so like I said, you do not want to lift anything too quickly and see those spikes and see our ICU wards inundated. So, we need to tread very carefully. So, I think what we'll be seeing is some other states, which have... they may move on restrictions before Queensland, so don't forget our border measures we put in place have been working, that was a very good decision that we made, a very sound decision. But we need to make sure that we get this right, and I cannot underestimate, or understate the fact to Queenslanders: if we get this wrong, it could go horribly wrong. So, caution is the best principle here.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] controls on the border, the New South Wales border, will they continue at that sort of level, with that sort of manpower in place?

PREMIER:

Yes, and if we see further interstate transmission, they could get harder closures.

REPORTER:

Yesterday the Prime Minister also said that one of the key factors in lifting restrictions would be having more... a more broad range of testing, when is Queensland going to move to that, outside of what has been expanded for Brisbane, the Gold Coast and Cairns/

PREMIER:

We are doing that testing. As Minister Miles just said, we are testing, I think he said 4000 over the last 24 hours? 2500, so half of what the national is doing. Dr Young can probably address that issue in a bit more detail. But also too, the Prime Minister talked extensively about that there needs to be a big, firm focus on that whole contact tracing for us to be able to be able to communicate with the public if there is a community outbreak. So, anything we do, there's risks so I think now it is about looking at that risk profile and what is in the best interest of Queenslanders. And look, I know it is tough at the moment, but in other countries they've been in lockdown situations for months, we've only been in it for a short amount of time and the last thing I would want to see is all of our good work come rapidly undone. So, we are going to tread carefully and responsibly.

REPORTER:

Are we throwing extra resources, then at the contact tracing and even ramping up the tests here further, then?

PREMIER:

Yes, so I think they're looking at some technological devices at the moment, that is at the federal level and we will be working on that. But remember, Yvette D'Ath came out here – and she'll be talking to you in more detail next week – that we are actually looking at getting 300 extra staff into that contact tracing unit that is managed by Health. So, we are going to absolutely increase that, but it is a fine balance to get this right. So, every jurisdiction is looking at what they can do, but I don't want to give people false hope that it is going to be an automatic lift, it doesn't work like that. The virus is here, the virus is in Queensland and we all need to understand that.

REPORTER:

Do you have any more clarity, Premier, on schools and parents who are forced to work from home and whether they should send their children to school, or is it up to parents and, or the principals?

PREMIER:

I think from memory, Minister Grace said to me that if the parents are not capable of supervising those children whilst they are working from home, they can have a conversation with their principal.

REPORTER:

And there are some reports that various schools want parents to email and check in, actually add their names to the enrolment each morning, [inaudible] and followed up?

PREMIER:

No, there is no police. My understanding is that usually sometimes if the school is concerned about whether a student is supposed to be there or not, they can send a text message. So I think that is just routine that has been happening now for a long time.

REPORTER:

One more from me. Given the cases from the Ruby Princess here, is it time New South Wales and the authorities apologised to Queensland and the families here?

PREMIER:

Unfortunately, we've had tragedies happen here as a result of the Ruby Princess, and I know that the Premier has called a commission of inquiry down there. They are matters that I think we'll leave to other jurisdictions, but unfortunately there has been deaths here and families that are grieving. I think I'll leave it at that for today, Lane.

REPORTER:

Just on the borders, you just hinted before that they could get tougher, those closures potentially. How would that work?

PREMIER:

No, I said depending on the number of interstate transmission. So, Dr Young talked the other day about we're seeing an increase of those interstate transmissions, but we're not looking at that at this stage, but I am not ruling that out in the future if we see a rapid increase of that.

REPORTER:

How do you get any tougher than checking every tyre and people being put into isolation?

PREMIER:

It can get a lot tougher, Lane.

REPORTER:

Premier, just quickly on Virgin Australia, how far would the State Government go to ensure that company remains in Queensland, and survives too?

PREMIER:

I think we should start with the principle that it is always good to have a second airline – a national airline – operating in Australia and especially for regional parts of Australia. And look, the State Government is continuing their talks, not only with Virgin but also the federal government. I am just going to leave it at that.

REPORTER:

Dr Young, can you provide some clarification on the testing regime for Queensland, will that be expanded like the Prime Minister suggested it would have to be, as one of those three criteria?



DR YOUNG:

So, in Queensland we've already significantly expanded testing. So in the last 24 hours we did 2503 tests patients, so 2503 people were tested. In the entire country, in the 24 hours before that because that's the most recent data I've got, 4884 Australians were tested. So we're doing more than half of the testing for the entire nation here in Queensland. We will immediately expand that testing if there is any reason to do so. So last Monday, 11 days ago I expanded the testing in Queensland to include anyone in Cairns, Gold Coast or Brisbane with any respiratory symptoms because we've had a small number of community acquired cases. Not many at all, we've not had community acquired cases elsewhere, but if we do, we'll expand them. Our public health units have the ability today to test anyone that they have any concerns about, so we already have that in place. And anyone who is admitted to any hospital in Queensland with pneumonia of an unknown cause automatically gets tested as well. So we're doing an enormous amount of testing and it's due to the work that the pathology services here in Queensland have done. Initially our public pathology service at Forensic and Scientific Services, which stood up very, very quickly early on, then our central laboratory and then our Townsville laboratory and the private sectors – both QML and SNP have put in place testing. So we have enormous capacity in Queensland and if needed we can increase that. We've received some of those cartridges for the gene experts so they're being distributed throughout Queensland as we speak. So we'll be able to do testing more locally through 28 more facilities so that's happening as we speak and we're receiving more of those cartridges so we'll be able to do even more testing. So I have no concerns about testing in Queensland. We're doing an enormous amount already and we'll increase it wherever it's needed. That's no issue.

REPORTER:

Dr Young, the contact tracing phone app technology. Is that something you support or Queenslanders should be using?

DR YOUNG:

It's something I'll be very, very interested to look at when we are able to see it. So we've had some extensive discussions about potentially what it can do and that's ongoing. So the Commonwealth plans to have it ready fairly soon. Which will be another tool. Every single additional tool we have is excellent. We have a lot of contact tracing staff in Queensland already and we're training up more, although we actually don't need them at the moment because we've gone from having a significant number of cases a day to only having the five, six or seven. So at the moment we can easily contact trace those numbers. But additional staff are being trained as we speak so if we were to have any increased cases we could immediately increase the staff numbers. But having a tool such as an app is an additional way that we can manage it which is always excellent.

REPORTER:

Dr Young, I understand that flight from Sydney to Brisbane, it landed on Monday. The passengers were told to quarantine via email on Thursday. Why weren't all of those passengers quarantined as soon as they landed in Brisbane?

DR YOUNG:

So we do all of this contact tracing as soon as we get the information from the relevant place and manage it. And you can see we're effective because we're getting such small numbers of cases every single day so we know that what we're doing in Health is working and we also know what every Queenslanders out there is doing is working.

REPORTER:

But aren't all people coming from interstate meant to quarantine for 14 days regardless?

DR YOUNG:

It depends. If they're Queenslanders returning home and they haven't come from a hotspot, there's no need for them to quarantine. If they've come from a hotspot, yes they need to quarantine but they can quarantine in their own home and they're given orders to do that. If they're non-Queenslanders they actually need an exemption to be able to come into the state. So they've got to be part of those cohorts that we feel are essential for the ongoing functioning of our state.

REPORTER:

Dr Young, Professor Ian Frazer says rural communities with no cases should be able to open up and resume life as normal but continue with social distancing restrictions...I've just had this question come in, do you have any response to that?

DR YOUNG:

Of course. So they're all of the discussions that will be happening across the country over the next four weeks that we've heard from our Premier. It's all part of the mix. It's too early to go and lift these restrictions now. We've had those lower case numbers but not for that long. We've just got to keep working on it and seeing what the result is.

REPORTER:

On Palm Island, I'm not if you can answer this, maybe Health Minister it's for you? Funerals on Palm Island...there have been mass groups there having funerals with lots of people and they haven't been getting exemptions. How is that actually still allowed?

DR YOUNG:

Well it's really, really difficult. I must admit, I find the restrictions on funerals extraordinarily difficult and I can understand the concerns people have. We're working with all of our communities across the state about how they can safely manage funerals and grieve because it is very, very difficult. I'm not so worried about other functions. You can actually hold a wedding celebration in a years time. You can do all those other things in the future, but funerals are difficult. So they are a risk. Any gatherings are, of course, a significant risk. So we need to continue to work with communities who have been very understanding and we'll continue that process. Thank you.

REPORTER:

Can I ask Minister Miles one? A quick one?



We're finished. Thank you. Tomorrow.

[ENDS]

Released under RTI - DPC



Engagement: Press conference

Speaker/s: Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk, Minister Steven Miles, Chief Health Officer Dr Jeanette Young, Minister Cameron Dick

Date: 20 April 2020

Duration: 14 minutes

E&OE

PREMIER:

Alright. So just to start off this morning. Can I once again thank Queenslanders for the amazing job that you are doing in terms of combatting coronavirus across our state. Today I'm very pleased to report that we have zero cases. Zero cases. This is absolutely tremendous effort. So our total still sits at 1,019 and if we can keep this up over the coming weeks, I'm sure that's going to mean that we'll be able to make some changes and ease some of those restrictions on the population. So thank you Queensland for the enormous effort that you are doing. This is tremendous news but we want to see this over a period of weeks and I'm overjoyed today that we've seen this result. Dr Young will talk a little more detail off course, we'll still be having people coming back from overseas and we've still got people in quarantine and unfortunately, we have had some cases of people coming from interstate but from our large population in Queensland of nearly 5 million people to have zero cases its been around 81 days since we've had that record so well one. I'll hand over to Steven and Dr Young but I just want to say a few comments about Virgin and of course Minister for State Development, Cameron Dick will address this in more detail. Let me make it very clear - Queensland wants to keep Virgin's headquarters here in Queensland and the thousands of jobs that it supports. We believe there should be a second national carrier and we all know how important Virgin is for our regions and how it is important for our tourism, especially for recovery into the future. So, Minister Cameron Dick will address this in more detail. We will continue to fight to keep Virgin here in Queensland. Let me make it very clear. I will hand over now to Minister Miles, Dr Young and then Cameron.

MINISTER MILES:

Thanks so much, Premier. This is a fantastic result for Queensland - zero new cases overnight, leaving our total at 1019. This is the reward for the effort we all put in over that Easter long weekend. It's a fantastic result. It's exactly where we'd hoped we could get to and now we hope we can sustain it. Of all of our cases, just 20 remain in hospital. Seven are in intensive care. They are all receiving ventilation. They are all in the south-east corner. Of course, we've seen in other countries, reductions to near zero levels of cases and then a second wave of infection so we need to be very cautious. We need to keep up our current approach, but if we can sustain this then the end is in sight. So, it is a fantastic result for Queenslanders.

DR YOUNG:

Well, this is indeed excellent news so no new cases of Covid-19 in Queensland overnight. Over the last few days, we've seen only a handful of cases each day 6 through to 8. So that means all of the strategies that are in place are working and more importantly than that, Queenslanders have heard the message and are following them. Unfortunately, they'll need to follow them for a while still to come. We know that if we were to significantly release any of those restrictions, that we would probably end up with some other countries have that we're seeing at the moment. There are some things we can do, off course we can do and those are the things that we will be looking at carefully, where we can remove some of those restrictions that we feel won't lead to a bounce back in those numbers of cases. So that's the work that's currently happening here in Queensland and off course, the National Cabinet. They'll be discussing this and the Prime Minister has said that over the four weeks if we can manage surveillance, we can manage contact tracing and we can manage to put in place rapid response teams so when we do have a case somewhere, we can rapidly respond and make sure that it's immediately managed, then we can look at what restrictions can be further eased. Thank you.

MINISTER DICK:

While Queenslanders have a woken this morning to some great news about the zero number of positive cases for Covid-19 across our state last night, they've woken up to some bad news. Some bad news this morning when they heard the attempt by the New South Wales Government to relocate the headquarters of Virgin to New South Wales. Can I just say this to the New South Wales Treasurer, back off. Back right off, just don't go there. If the world knows on thing, it knows this, there is nothing more dangerous than Queenslanders with their backs to the wall. We will stop at nothing to insure that the headquarters of Virgin remains in Queensland. We have got nothing to lose. Queensland has got nothing to lose because Virgin workers have got everything to lose. Now New South Wales might to want to bring a peashooter the fight, that's fine, we'll bring a bazooka and we're not afraid to use it. I think this is more about propping up the Western Sydney Airport than it is about the genuine interest of the Virgin workers. We know that the Federal Government has provided billions of dollars to the New South Wales Government to support that airport, and what we expect the Federal Government to do is to support Virgin workers in Queensland. Can I say, Virgin is flying through a cyclone, Virgin is flying through a cyclone and we need everyone on the ground to help this airline land. And the one air traffic controller that hasn't turned up, the one air traffic controller that is not on duty is the Prime Minister. We are calling on Scott Morrison – as I said on Saturday – to come to the party and to show some national leadership. This is national airline in a national crisis and it needs a national response. The Prime Minister often says “how good is Queensland?”, the truth is, how good are 5000 Virgin jobs in Queensland, how good is 1200 jobs at the Bowen Hills headquarters for Virgin? They're pretty darn good, and they need to stay in this state. It is a nonsense to think that the Federal Government should even consider a New South Wales proposal to shift these workers at a time of great dislocation, at a time of great uncertainty to New South Wales. So we're going to fight on, because this is such an important thing, not just for Queensland but for Australia. This country needs two airlines, we know the benefit that comes from a national two airline policy, that must continue. And the way to continue it is to ensure Virgin can stay together

and can keep flying. So, we stand for all of those workers in Queensland, and their families who are living through a time of terrible crisis. We need to keep that airline going, we need to have a two airline policy in this country, we need the national government to broker a solution so we can all move forward together, and when we get to the end of this terrible pandemic, we'll have two airlines and everyone in this country will benefit from that.

REPORTER:

What will you stop at to secure Virgin?

MINISTER DICK:

We will continue to do whatever we have to keep this airline in Queensland. Queensland is the home of two national airlines, we were the home of Qantas 100 years ago when they started operations out of Queensland, and we are the home of Virgin, they started operations here 20 years ago. So, aviation means so much to our state, particularly regional communities but we need a national solution to this. Now, can I also say this? Yesterday, on Sunday, it was reported that the Federal Government has worked on principles to support a two airline policy and I am calling on the Prime Minister today – that was reported around the country – I am calling on the Prime Minister to release those principles today. We need to know what those principles are to support a two-airline policy. When we get understanding of that, we can all work together, so let's work together on this. It is not a time for competition, it's a time for collaboration, but we need a central point in this and that is the Federal Government.

REPORTER:

Is Queensland prepared to offer more than the \$200 million you already have?

MINISTER DICK:

At this time, that is what our commitment is, but as the Premier has said, we are going to keep this under very close attention. We will continue to work on it as a government, if there is more we need to put in, we will consider that, but let's see where it goes today. Let's see the national principles, let's see what the Prime Minister wants to do and then we can work forward together to keep two airlines in this country.

REPORTER:

Before coronavirus, Virgin was pretty much a failed business. Why should the taxpayers prop it up?

MINISTER DICK:

The reality is there is a cost to keep the airline going, but I say to everyone, what is the cost of losing a second airline? We saw what happened 20 years ago when Ansett went under, it was catastrophic particularly for regional Queensland. Regional Queensland will be the loser from this, those 5000 people who work in Virgin in Queensland will lose their job, the 16,000 people that work around the country. If anyone thinks there's going to be a second airline that will come into this country after COVID, if Virgin goes under, they're absolutely kidding themselves. Airlines around the world are struggling, and governments around the world are contributing to those airlines. The United State Federal Government has put an enormous

amount of money into US airlines. We don't think our nation should be any different, we need two airlines, we need a two-airline policy, that's why we're doing our bit as a state, we can't do it on our own, we need national leadership.

REPORTER:

Why shouldn't the major shareholders – some of those big airlines around the world – help prop up Virgin?

MINISTER DICK:

Of course they should, and I've said that publicly.

REPORTER:

Is there anything else Virgin should be doing different, do you think, in order to keep going?

MINISTER DICK:

I think they're doing everything they can, I think they're doing everything they can to try and keep the entity together. I know the board is constantly meeting, I know the executive team is constantly meeting. We are, of course, in touch with them, we're also in touch with the Federal Government, but we need to take some steps forward today to ensure Virgin keeps flying and it's headquarters remain in Queensland.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] these results – the small numbers – having to continue for weeks before you look at restrictions, how many weeks? And isn't there a danger the public will see these low figures and say, we've got nothing to worry about?

PREMIER:

That is a really good question, and of course our Queensland Disaster Management Committee will be keeping a really close eye on these figures. We will be meeting this week and of course next week, and nationally we are also looking at what restrictions can be lifted, recognising that some states will be able to lift restrictions before other ones. So, you know, this is the first day of zero, but if we saw a trend of these really low numbers, I think it is only right that people will be saying to government, what can you do to make our lives a little bit easier and a little bit less restrictive.

REPORTER:

What is that? What are the first things...

PREMIER:

I am not going to pre-empt that because we have meetings to discuss that, but you'll be the first to know when I come out of those meetings.

REPORTER:

So, that curve is flattening though, in Queensland?



PREMIER:

Absolutely, I am so encouraged, Queensland is definitely flattening the curve, absolutely, definitely.

REPORTER:

Is Queensland still looking at that month, I guess to go, for the lockdown to be in place?

PREMIER:

Sorry?

REPORTER:

Is Queensland still looking at those 30 days for the restrictions to be in place?

PREMIER:

Well we're actually in a semi-lockdown, we're not in a full lockdown – so I just want to clarify that – and the National Cabinet said, of course, said that we would be considering those within a month, I think it was around the 15th of May. But like I said, our management committee meets every week – our Disaster Management Committee – and I'll be updating Queenslanders in relation to that.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] association for the master plan to create jobs, 10,000 jobs around the state, would you be prepared to contribute to that?

PREMIER:

We are always looking at opportunities to create jobs, we've worked very closely with councils, our Works for Queensland program is about accelerating jobs, and of course my government is working on an accelerated jobs plan as we speak.

REPORTER:

Premier, [inaudible] Education Department's website is down this morning, how long is it going to take to get it back online?

PREMIER:

I am not aware of that, happy to have a look into it and I will get Minister Grace to respond to that.

REPORTER:

Is it frustrating that it has gone down?

PREMIER:

I think we always said there was going to be some teething issues, and probably it has been overwhelmed by the number of people that are actually logging on, Josh. So happy to look into that issue.



REPORTER:

In terms of that decision in the middle of Term 2, what does that depend on? Is it the health advice specifically, or is it how that remote online learning is going?

PREMIER:

It is dependent on the health advice, but of course, where we can see more children interacting with their teachers, I think that is a positive thing for students.

REPORTER:

Is there any update on the NRL in Queensland? What's the go there?

PREMIER:

There's no update there, we of course are open to look at any plan, there has been no plan submitted, there has been no phone calls. But in relation to the QRL and the State of Origin, yes, of course I have spoken to Bruce Hatcher and as I said from day one, towards the end of the year we would be open to that if the health advice said that we were in the situation to do so.

REPORTER:

So, obviously right now we've got players coming from Sydney, which of course is an epicentre for coronavirus, that would be far too risky.

PREMIER:

There has been no plan submitted to the Queensland Government. Thank you.

[ENDS]

Engagement: Press conference

Speaker/s: Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk, Tony Ferris – President of the RSL, Minister Steven Miles, Chief Health Officer Dr Jeanette Young and Minister Cameron Dick

Date: 21 April 2020

Duration: 31 minutes

E&OE

PREMIER:

Good morning everyone. So overnight we've had six positive cases, taking our total to 1024, and we've had over 87,000 tests. So Minister Miles will give us a further update in a moment, and also Dr Young wants to talk about some issues that have come up in Cairns, so I think it is very important that the Cairns community listens very closely to what Dr Young has to say about Cairns. But, before handing over to Steven and to Dr Young, today we are joined with RSL President Tony Ferris, and I know that Anzac Day is coming up and it is going to be a very different Anzac day for people, and I really want to thank the public for their understanding during this time, and Tony will talk to us about how we can all play our part to light up the dawn, and I think this is a wonderful initiative and I know the RSL is 100 per cent behind that. We have had discussion with the RSL and there will be a wreath laying commemorative service that will be undertaken at 4.28am on Saturday, it'll be attended by a very small group, the Governor will be in attendance, the Lord Mayor Adrian Schinner will be in attendance, Tony Ferris will be in attendance as President of the RSL, and I will be in attendance as Premier of Queensland. This commemorative service will be on behalf of the people of Queensland, we will be laying a wreath individually, there will be the national anthems and there will be a pool camera, and the last post. So I hope everyone is understanding, but we did want to make sure that there was a commemorative process for Anzac Day. A very small, but symbolic, gesture that the people of Queensland are recognising the fallen. So, I really want to thank the RSL and I want to thank Dr Young for giving this exemption for four people to attend this, but of course practicing social distancing and laying a wreath individually. So, I might just handover to Tony to say a few words and I want to once again thank the RSL during this time, and then we will hand over to Steven and Dr Young, and Cameron is here of course to address Virgin.

TONY FERRIS:

Thank you Premier, and good morning ladies and gentlemen. I would just like to encourage Queenslanders, this Anzac Day, the 25th of April, to step out onto their driveways, their verandas or their porches at 6am in the morning and commemorate those that have gone and served this country, those that are currently serving this country and those that have come home with their injuries and are still suffering with those injuries. This will be a very different year for us this year, but I see it as being a very symbolic year because I think this

will encapsulate every Australian and get every Australian involved in an Anzac Day dawn service, something we probably haven't seen for a very, very long time. It is my belief that we need to do this, step out, socially isolate and remember those Anzacs. On the RSL Queensland website which will allow you to turn around the full service from start to finish, it is fully timed, and it will be beneficial if you turn around and play that. For me, this is hair on the back of your neck stuff, this is the dream I think, where everybody will turn around and become involved. To look out of your driveway at 6am in the morning and see people lining the streets, still in social isolation but remembering those that have gone and served this country is going to be something that I don't think we will see for a long time to come. But I would like to thank the Premier for the opportunity of having this conversation with the public this morning, and I wish you all the best. Lest we forget.

MINISTER MILES:

As the Premier outlined, we now have 6 additional cases of COVID-19, bringing our adjusted total to 1024. We are now doubling our rate of cases every 41 weeks, you'll recall that that peaked at just under three days, doubling just under three days. It brings our total for the week to 25, and you will recall that there was a period there where we were consistently seeing twice that number a day, we are now seeing that number a week. Six is good compared to those numbers, but it is not zero, and for that reason we need to continue to be vigilant, to do what we can to suppress this virus. 21 people are in Queensland hospitals right now with COVID-19, just six of them are intensive care and five of them are ventilated. We continue to test more than 1500 people a day, in fact we've now tested more than 83,000 Queenslanders for COVID-19. The Chief Health Officer will outline some initiatives in a moment to allow us to expand testing in Cairns where some concerns continue to relate positive tests from the Cairns pathology lab there. We are doing that because we can, because we have very substantial testing capacity and that means that we can test a lot of people in the Cairns region and determine exactly to what extent there is community transmission in Cairns. We have a chance now to track it and to suppress it, and so our message to Cairns locals today is to please listen very carefully to what the Chief Health Officer has to say, and if you fit that criteria, please seek medical advice quickly. I'd urge all of you with a Cairns footprint, in terms of media, to please ensure that this message is well broadcast into Cairns so that people hear this message, it is very important, and it will give us a chance to get on top of whatever community transmission there is in Cairns.

DR YOUNG:

One month ago a technician went up from Brisbane up to Cairns, and then when he returned back to Brisbane was tested positive for COVID-19. And some initial contact tracing was done in the lab which didn't confirm anything. Then last week we had one of the lab workers, who has worked in that lab tested positive, and we were unsure where that lab worker actually contracted that infection. We now have confirmation that it was in the lab, because overnight I received the serology results for three other people who had been in that lab who had been infected, had the infection, and have recovered, but it is clear that they got it from that initial person and therefore this latest person got it through that process. So, this is a new test. It only started here in Queensland on Monday, so it was good timing for us to be able to work through where this lab worker got infected who was confirmed positive last week. So

we're now doing further work to make sure that there are no other unwell staff members or patients in the Cairns Hospital and it's very important that across the whole community in Cairns, that anyone who is unwell with any respiratory symptoms - so cough, sore throat, or shortness of breath - that you immediately go and see your own GP or go to the fever clinic that's there in Cairns, to be tested. That's important, because we want to make sure that we don't have any ongoing community spread in Cairns. You would know that we have had some little clusters in and now, two weeks ago, I did ask people in Cairns if they had any symptoms to get tested. Now it's particularly important. So please, anyone in Cairns with any symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, please go and see your GP or go to the fever clinic. Thank you.

MINISTER DICK:

Well it's been reported today that Virgin Australia has made a decision to enter into voluntary administration. That announcement was made a little while ago. It's very disappointing news to hear that the company is going into administration. Our message today though is to the staff of Virgin Airlines. Our message today is to the workers of Virgin Airlines. While this is a sad and disappointing day, we haven't yet reached the end of runway. It's important now for all government, particularly the Federal Government...the national government to work with the administration to ensure the airline can continue as a going concern. No airline in the world anticipated the worst pandemic in 100 years. This has grounded civil aviation not just in our country but around the world. But what we do need in this country is two airlines going forward. And that is so critical, particularly to regional Queensland. Anyone who remembers what happened when Ansett disappeared knows how catastrophic it was for regional communities in our country. And it's very important that this airline can continue as a going concern in some form going forward. It's also very important for our Government that the airline just doesn't run Sydney-Melbourne, Sydney-Canberra, Melbourne-Canberra. Anyone can run an airline like that. What we need is an airline that runs to Gladstone, Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville and Cairns. Those communities deserve two airlines, they deserve low fares, they deserve the air to be fair and that's what we're going to continue to do. So as a government we will now work together, the Premier and I, to work with each other to work out a position as the government working with the administrator. But we do need the national government, we do need the Morrison Government who has done nothing and let the company go into administration, we do need them to come forward now. We're calling on them to work with us. Let's work with the administrator and let's back those thousands of Queenslanders who've made a career and a job and a life for themselves working for this airline, supporting regional Queensland. Let's work together to help them. That's the number one priority for our government and to those workers today I say we stand with you, we're going to help you going forward.

PREMIER:

Any questions?

REPORTER:

Premier, can you just explain this Cairns situation in a bit more detail? Perhaps Dr Young could explain it?

PREMIER:

So like Dr Young said, we want anyone that's got any of those symptoms to come forward and get tested so what we want to rule out is any further community transmission. So I think it's really important, especially families living in Cairns, to please heed what Dr Young has said and if you do have any of those symptoms to please present and get tested because we want to make sure that we stamp out community transmission in Cairns. So we've got the capability to do the testing up there so please come forward.

REPORTER:

So how many people associated with that lab? Is it four people?

PREMIER:

I might get Dr Young, you can ask some questions to Dr Young on that.

REPORTER:

Is it four people who have tested positive who have been associated with that lab, is that right?

DR YOUNG:

Right, so only two have tested positive through PCR testing, so acute testing. That was the initial case a month ago who went up from Brisbane and tested positive back in Brisbane. And then the second case was the lab worker last week who tested positive. What we've gone and done is a different type of testing. We've gone and done serology testing that looks at immunoglobulin to see whether someone has had the infection, mounted an antibody response and has recovered. So we have three people who on serology testing has tested positive, through a different process.

REPORTER:

For those three and the one who tested positive last week would have been infected by the technician who came..?

DR YOUNG:

No, there would have been multiple generations because it's been a month since that initial case was confirmed.

REPORTER:

So is there any indication as to how those other three may have become infected?

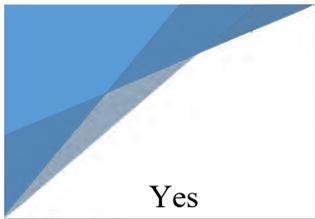
DR YOUNG:

Yes, from that initial person.

REPORTER:

Right.

DR YOUNG:



REPORTER:

So not through handling some of the results in the lab? It was from the first person [inaudible] Brisbane?

DR YOUNG:

Well we don't know. Because the initial person most likely infected someone through direct contact with someone. That's the most common transmission. But you can of course get transmission through fomites which is why I'm continually saying to people to wash your hands. So, in terms of how each person got it, whether it was direct contact with a case or whether it was through picking something up and then touching their face, it's difficult to know.

REPORTER:

Is there any other threat to the rest of the hospital up there or is it just contained to the lab?

DR YOUNG:

No. of course people who work in the lab can work through the rest of the hospital, can walk through the rest of the hospital. So that's why today we're doing some work with all staff members in the hospital to see if anyone else is unwell.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]..testing of hospital staff?

DR YOUNG:

It could be. At this stage we're just screening all hospital staff to see if they have any symptoms.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]

DR YOUNG:

It was the pathology lab so it included all of the pathology. So, haematology, histology, microbiology etc, it's their entire pathology laboratory.

REPORTER:

Are you concerned, like how concerned are you I suppose?

DR YOUNG:

Well, it's a cluster that's occurred but we need to get on top of it so it's really important that anyone who lives in Cairns who has any symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, any of those respiratory symptoms, comes forward and gets tested.

REPORTER:

Is there any evidence that any of these people have transmitted the disease to anyone outside the hospital?

DR YOUNG:

No but that is why I am asking people to come forward and get tested.

REPORTER:

Inaudible question

DR YOUNG:

I don't know and that's why I am asking that anyone that's unwell gets tested. That's really important. We haven't seen a lot of cases in Cairns. I would suspect if there was a wide spread problem that we would have seen a lot more cases because Cairns has had community testing for any symptoms of Covid-19 in place now for two weeks and we've not seen significant numbers of cases.

REPORTER:

Does this underline the need to keep those restrictions in place, that's it's too early to [inaudible]?

DR YOUNG:

It does. Yes, it is too early. We did have although it's a very small number, we did have six cases confirmed overnight. Those six cases don't include these three in Cairns that were tested with Serology, these are all PCR cases. So we did have six cases overnight which is a very good result but it means that we still do have cases in our community so it's too early to consider lifting any restrictions at this time.

REPORTER:

On regions, further to that, for some of the restrictions to be lifted, Townsville hasn't had a case for 12 days, what would you say to people in places like Townsville about maintaining those restrictions?

DR YOUNG:

Yeah, the problem is that the incubation period for this virus is actually 14 days and you probably need to allow for two incubation periods before you can safely say that you're not going to get more cases which is why our National Cabinet is looking at what restrictions can be lifted in that four week period because that's two incubation periods.

REPORTER:

Is it possible that this lab technician could have been infected through, whatever, is in the lab. Can you rule out that they didn't become infected while testing when coming in contact with the Covid-19 sample?

DR YOUNG:

Yeah, I can because pathology labs have very stringent processes in place. They have what are called biosafety cabinets that they deal with specimens so all of that is done and we don't see pathology staff getting infected from the samples they deal with. We just don't see that normally and this virus in terms of it's handling and it's infectivity is no different to flu for instance and we see enormous numbers of flu cases each year. We don't see them in pathology staff members who get it at work.

REPORTER:

When talking about these regions, they would need to have 28 days of no new cases before restrictions would be considered to be lifted?

DR YOUNG:

That's the case for the whole country that we really need to look at two incubation periods before we can safely remove any of the restrictions.

REPORTER:

Dr Young just with the hospital testing, how big of a process it that for those Cairns Hospital staff and where do you even begin with that?

DR YOUNG:

Right, so, they've already begun by looking at all of the staff that have had access to the pathology labs, so they have proxy cards access which means we know every single person who's walked in and out of that lab in the period that we're concerned about so that's already happened and so far we haven't found anyone other than that one lab worker whose been tested PCR positive. There's a few more and another 10 we're contacting today but we haven't found anyone. The next today is that we will be working with every single staff member on duty in the Cairns Hospital to make sure that they don't have any symptoms and we'll have a very low threshold for testing any staff member who has any symptom at all.

Right, so, they've already begun by looking at all of the staff that have had access to the pathology labs. So they have prox card access which means that we know every single person who's walked in and out of that lab in the period that we're concerned about. So that's already happened. And so far we haven't found anyone other than that one lab workers who's been tested PCR positive. There's a few more, another 10 that we're contacting today, but we haven't found anyone. The next step is that today we will be working with every single staff member on duty in the Cairns hospital to make sure that they don't have any symptoms, and we'll have a very low threshold for testing any staff member who has any symptom at all.

REPORTER:

And that's the screening you speak of which is different to testing?

DR YOUNG:

Yes. So we'll screen people but have a very low threshold for testing people.

REPORTER:

Are you going to provide the same screening with the second test to any of the people that that technician came in contact with after returning to Brisbane?

DR YOUNG:

I have asked them to go and have another look at the contact tracing that occurred from that individual when they returned to Brisbane. So that's happening at the moment.

REPORTER:

How many lab workers have been sent up from Brisbane to relieve the crew that are in quarantine?

DR YOUNG:

I think it was around 20 or so. I'm not sure.

REPORTER:

And if the virus has gotten into the hospital, what would that mean for staffing levels at the Cairns Hospital? Will we have to look at deploying people from Townsville or Brisbane?

DR YOUNG:

I think we need to take each step as we get more information and then decide what needs to happen. I am very reassured that despite the large amount of testing that has been done in Cairns through the community over the last two weeks that we haven't seen a large number of cases that we don't know where they've come from.

REPORTER:

Premier, New South Wales has announced that they're going to reopen schools from May 11 for one day a week building to full school days for Term 3, is that something that you might think of doing?

PREMIER:

Yeah, thanks Lane. Of course, we'll be reviewing it by May 15 and letting parents know, but of course our aim would be to encourage more student-teacher contact. So we'll look at all those options but once again it depends on how our number of cases go, as Dr Young said, over the next month. So the next month is pretty critical for making any of those decisions.

REPORTER:

Premier [inaudible] says you're thumbing your nose at accountability in terms of Parliament not sitting like it usually does, what are your comments towards that?

PREMIER:

Well it would have been nice if the Courier had published our comments in relation to that which were provided to your office. So let me make it very clear, the Prime Minister has indicated that the Federal Parliament will be sitting in May and they're going to see how it goes. I have said very clearly that we will also sit in May for a full three-day sitting week to see how it goes. But let me make it very clear. The Federal Parliament is putting in place

strict adherence to social distancing. We will be doing exactly the same. We are also looking at seeing how we can get all of our MPs to participate which is why we are looking at how they can be involved online during next month's sitting. But I'm not ruling out that some of our regional MPs may be able to come to Parliament depending on how our cases go. So these answers were provided to your paper, and unfortunately they weren't published.

REPORTER:

How does that work when the Speaker says that people shouldn't be, I guess, travelling intra-state? Is that going forward, you mean, with MPs?

PREMIER:

Well that's why I said in May we will be reviewing that. So if regional MPs are able to come down, there are now more flights that are being made available, some people may choose to drive down or some people may catch the train, but what we are looking at very clearly is how can our Parliament accommodate all of our MPs to be involved. So that may be some online, some physically present. But can I make it very clear? We have to actually adhere to the social distancing rules, and what Jarrod Bleijie did last time was absolutely disgraceful where he called a division and asked every single MP to come into the chamber. Now we have advice, I'm advised by the Leader of the House and the Clerk, that we can have 20 MPs in that chamber, and the Leader of the House has been working very constructively with the Opposition to work out an agreement of how we can proceed further. This has happened at the Federal level. So I say to the Opposition, work with the Government. We want our Parliament, our democracy to work. We'll be sitting one day this month, and my intention is to follow the national parliament and if they sit for a full three days next month, I am more than happy to convene for the three full days. And we want to encourage as many MPs as possible to get involved.

REPORTER:

White spot has been detected again in south east Queensland, how concerned are you?

PREMIER:

I know. Just when we thought we were out of that, another case has been detected. So it is a big issue for our prawn industry and we will continue to monitor that, Josh. So I'll get an update from Minister Furner for you.

REPORTER:

Just to go back to the school opening. What is the benchmark? What hope can you give to parents struggling to help their kids and also given the failure of the system yesterday, online system, what are the hurdles that need to be overcome before you can open up the schools?

PREMIER:

Yeah well, Michael, I didn't know we were going to have a world pandemic. We are trying everything we possibly can, and we're working with parents and teachers and the school community, making sure our most vulnerable people are protected, but also too we want to get our kids educated as well. So the teachers are there to educate. Look, unfortunately there

were issues with the computer system yesterday. I understand it's working ok this morning, but there are going to be teething problems. So I say to parents, we are trying everything we possibly can. These are unprecedented times, and please continue to work with us. And once again we've got commercial networks as well that are assisting with having teaching online. We are trying everything we can to make this as easy as possible for parents, for students and for teachers and the whole school community, and also ensuring that our workers, our frontline workers, can actually be out there on the frontline and their students can actually be at school so they don't have to worry about whether or not they're going to be a nurse for the day or not.

REPORTER:

But parents are looking, from Queensland, and seeing other states that are opening so why are we...

PREMIER:

Well they're not

PREMIER:

Why are we not? Well they're given a time lime

PREMIER:

But they're in a different situation than us Michael. So, it would be absolutely irresponsible of me to fully open our schools when social distancing can't be practiced or worked out. Where you would put teachers lives in risk and also where you have some community transmission. So I need to make sure that we are taking each week as it comes and like I said, we are reviewing that in May, halfway through the school term and I think that is a very good decision to see how we are going with our case numbers and what we can.

REPORTER:

What's the different in Queensland to the rest of Australia? You said we're different circumstance...

PREMIER:

Tell me, no please tell me what you are saying here?

REPORTER:

You said we're different circumstance...

PREMIER:

But which other state? Which other state?

REPORTER:

Well Victoria's ah....

PREMIER:

Victoria's not. Victoria's got online learning

REPORTER:

Ok they're the only ones. WA's open, New South Wales are opening in two weeks.

PREMIER:

Well on, New South Wales is not. They're gradually bringing it back and that is exactly what I'm looking at in a months' time.

REPORTER:

A question to the Health Minister?

PREMIER:

Yeah and then I have to go to National Cabinet so can we just have...

REPORTER:

Can we just get one question on the regions? I know this h

PREMIER:

Yes

REPORTER:

I know this has been covered but Townsville and Rockhampton, you mentioned before they could be opened earlier. There's only a few active cases in those areas. Is that something you're looking at – central Queensland, Townsville, North Queensland – opening up parts?

PREMIER:

National Cabinet is looking at all of these issues. The National Cabinet is working extremely well. We discuss education, we discuss contact tracing, we discuss the health advice and we discuss what restrictions can be lifted. But look, let's be very clear – we still have positive cases being reported. And we're trying to stamp that down and we're flattening the curve. And Queenslanders are doing a tremendous job but all you need is one dinner party, one birthday party and it could be just blown out of proportion. So that is why we are taking a precautionary approach and of course, when we can lift restrictions you have my guarantee that absolutely we will. So look, I might hand over to Dr Young and then I really have to go to National Cabinet.

REPORTER:

Just questions on elective surgery. Last week you announced it would be ramping up a little bit again. Do you have any figures on how many surgeries have gone ahead since then?

MINISTER MILES:

Not at this stage and that work is still largely in the planning phase. It is quite detailed, it will vary depending on the capability of each HHS as well as what restrictions remain in place at a national level based on decisions of the National cabinet.

REPORTER:

And the Opposition's asking for elective surgeries in private hospitals to increase, what do you say to that?

MINISTER MILES:

That will certainly be part of our plan will be to ramp up elective surgery both in public and private hospitals based on their capability. That varies substantially region to region so each of our HHS's is doing that planning work now and would hope to have at least some of it in place by next week.

REPORTER:

If Virgin does go down for good, what's going to happen to all the workers?

MINISTER DICK:

Well our work and our focus as a government is to ensure that the airline is not broken up. We do not want the airline to go into liquidation. This is a good airline that can contribute to Queensland and Australia in the future. So the number one thing governments have to do with the administrator and with any interested party, is to keep the airline together so we can support those jobs. Keep those jobs in hibernation, keep those workers paid until we can get through this pandemic. Because Australia will need two airlines when we come out of this. When we open up again our country, a large continent like Australia, needs two airlines. So, our focus is on supporting the airline and supporting the workers so they can stay together as a going concern and the business is not broken up. But every day this is changing. We do need the national government to step up. We can't be blaming the workers as the LNP in Queensland has sort to do. We need to get behind these workers. There's only one leader in this country that has put money on the table and has sort to support Virgin and that's Annastacia Palaszczuk. And we're working together to ensure that can continue and we'll now reach out to the administrator to offer support but we'll need to see them do their initial work before we can take any further action.

REPORTER:

You're asking the Federal Government to step up, what exactly do you want them to do?

MINISTER DICK:

They need to come to the party to support the administrator and to support the ongoing operations of the business while it's in hibernation. Every other national government around the world is supporting their local airlines, supporting their antional airlines. The Federal Government of the United States is supporting airlines in the united States. We need to get away from this economic rationalist approach – let the airline crash, someone else will come and start another airline in Australia. No one's going to start another airline in Australia. Every airline around the world is grounded. They aren't flying. There is no revenue. Unless they've got a very, very large capital base they can't contribute to Australia. One thing that COVID has taught all of us is we need to look after ourselves. That's so important and we're calling on the Australian Government to support because of the need of a two airline policy in this country. It's not just supporting one company. The other point is – Qantas isn't flying.

They have no revenue. They may not fly for months. Qantas may be in exactly the same position and we would expect the national government to support them as well so that's our work going forward.

REPORTER:

What's support mean? Are you saying they should come in with a big financial package? What does support mean?

MINISTER DICK:

Well the number one priority Michael is to ensure the workers continue to get paid. Because if you lose the workforce, if you lose this skilled workforce, as we saw in the automobile industry the car industry in Australia, you don't get it back. So the number one thing from my perspective is to ensure the workers continue to be paid. They're paid during the period of administration until the airline can come out and start flying again.

REPORTER:

Will you increase the bid of \$200 million dollars?

MINISTER DICK:

At this stage that is our commitment but of course, this is a rolling crisis. We need to see what the administrator says. We will engage with the administrator and take decisions after that. But one thing is for sure and certain – we're not going to abandon those workers and we're not going to abandon this airline.

REPORTER:

Are you asking the Federal Government to do more than the JobKeeper? Let's assume that JobKeeper continues for the staff, are you...

PREMIER:

Michael, last question because we've got to go

MINISTER DICK:

Yes

REPORTER:

To go more?

MINISTER DICK:

Yes

REPORTER:

Put more money on the table?

MINISTER DICK:

Yes



REPORTER:

Nationalised? Do you reckon they should nationalise?

MINISTER DICK:

Couldn't rule it out

[ENDS]

Released under RTI - DPC

Engagement: Press conference

Speaker/s: Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk, Health Minister Steven Miles and Chief Health Officer Dr Jeannette Young

Date: 22 April 2020

Duration: 14 minutes 20 seconds

E&OE

PREMIER:

In some more good news for Queensland, overnight we have another recording of zero cases. So well done Queensland, this is just the news that we need, so that's two zero cases this week, and we are really on the track to be smashing that curve. But of course, we still can't be complacent, and I want to make sure that we are giving more information to Queenslanders. So, today I am announcing that from lunchtime today we will actually be putting up, on the Queensland Health website and our COVID-19 website, some heatmaps from across Queensland, a regional breakdown of local government areas which some other states are doing, but also too information about quarantine in the different regions, this is about being transparent. We're also going to active cases, recovered cases and community transmission. So, I want to make sure that Queensland is getting the information that they want, I want to thank Health I asked them to put this together, and they have delivered and by lunchtime today that'll be up. It'll also be updated by lunchtime every day, so you'll get that information seven days a week. Today Parliament is sitting to pass urgent COVID related legislation. I want to thank the spirit of bipartisanship with the Opposition, they have agreed to a pairing arrangement, this is not uncommon, it's been happening at the Federal Parliament and it has also been happening in other jurisdictions and it is absolutely my intention for Parliament to resume at the same time as the Federal Parliament next month, so we don't have that date at the moment, but when Federal Parliament resumes, we will resume for that same time in May. Just out of National Cabinet, I just want to make a few comments. The first one is about the tracing app, we were briefed on that yesterday, we still have not seen the actual app and how it will work, but if we are going to ease restrictions down the future in Queensland, we will need Queenslanders to sign up to that app. So, once I get further briefings on that, I am happy to come back and brief Queenslanders on it. Secondly, another issue we discussed in some detail was in relation to aged care. I am really concerned that in Queensland – and I know this is the case because people have been saying this to me – in Queensland, some aged care home are in lockdown. There is no need for aged care homes to be in lockdown, families should be able to visit their loved ones. So, we have a Chief Health Officer directive there about after May you'll need to have your flu shot, but also too we don't want young people going into aged care. But I am actually shocked that there are many people saying to me they can't even go and visit their mother or their father, or their aunt or their uncle, and I am also hearing reports that some aged care residence are not allowing residents to actually even move out of their room. There is no need for this practice to happen, so, I please urge all of our aged care homes across Queensland, allow family

members in to see their loved ones, we need to make sure that is happening and I fully support the Prime Minister's comments and National Cabinet's consideration about this yesterday. I'll hand over to the Health Minister and Dr Young.

MINISTER MILES:

Thanks so much Premier. Well, when it comes to the effort to save lives from COVID-19, you can't do better than zero, and this is our second zero day in three and we hope to see many, many more days of no or very few positive cases here in Queensland, that is after all the objective. Yesterday we ticked over 90,000 tests for COVID-19, yesterday alone 2613 people. There are currently 20 people in Queensland hospitals with COVID-19. Seven of them are in intensive care and six of them are ventilated. As the Premier has announced, later today we will launch a new page on the Queensland Health website that will provide more granular data to Queenslanders about COVID-19 cases. That will include active cases by local government area and their source of infection as well as gender and age breakdown, number of people active and recovered, as well as the number of people currently in self quarantine. I know Queenslanders are very interested to see not just data for their state, but also for their local community and I hope that they find this website useful.

DR YOUNG:

We've seen no new cases of COVID-19 across the state in the last 24 hours, which means that everyone has been following the advice to minimise their contact with other people, because that's how this will continue and that's how we'll manage this pandemic here in Queensland, which is really good. In Cairns we haven't seen any new, or potentially new, cases overnight which is very encouraging. We know that yesterday people in Cairns were asked to come forward and be tested, and that happened, but we haven't seen any new cases which is really good. We need to keep a focus on Cairns in the upcoming days just to make sure that there are no additional cases from that cluster.

REPORTER:

Dr Young, before you go, given these low numbers – two zeroes in three days – is there a risk, or do you fear, that people will throw up their arms and say well, I don't have to self-isolate, I don't have to be in lockdown, I'm resuming normal life?

DR YOUNG:

It is a concern, of course, because the restrictions that are in place at the moment are onerous, I don't underestimate what it means for individuals, for families and communities to follow these restrictions. But we know they've got to remain in place until we can work out the impact. We know it takes two incubation periods before we can see the impact of changes that have occurred, so we really need to focus at the moment, and then work out what are the restrictions that can be lifted and that is a discussion that is happening here in Queensland, and of course at National Cabinet and that's where those decisions will be made.

REPORTER:

Can I just ask you about nursing homes? Isn't the advice if you've got sick parents, or anyone that is over the age of 65 with health issues, to not visit them? Wouldn't that make sense that for people who are in nursing homes that you wouldn't allow people in to visit them?

DR YOUNG:

No, it doesn't make sense because we've got a lot of information now that actually gives us the evidence. We know that the outbreaks that have occurred in Australia in nursing homes, in the main, have actually been due to staff, or due to residents. We haven't seen outbreaks where someone is visiting. Because people know what they should and shouldn't be doing, and they do it all the time. If you've got the flu you don't go and visit your elderly loved one in a nursing home. It is the same here, if you're unwell, don't go and visit. But if you're well, really, it is important to go and visit, it is important to go and talk to your relative on a regular basis. And yes, we can do that via the phone, we can do it via video conferencing but really that human involvement is so important. So, really, as long as people adhere to the restrictions that I've outlined in my direction, then the residents in nursing homes will be safe.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] the old people in nursing homes if they don't get those visits? In terms of their mental health and otherwise?

DR YOUNG:

Well of course people would understand. We're all dealing with these very onerous restrictions, but we've got some ways of being able to work through them. So, we can have up to two visitors in our homes, for instance. There are things we can do. But for people who live in aged care facilities, they've only got their family who normally would be coming in to visit. We've also seen in some aged care facilities, where the facility isn't even allowing those residents, although they're well, out of their room. I really hope they take on board the advice and look at what they're doing so that they can look after, not only the physical aspects of their residents' care, but the mental aspects.

REPORTER:

Dr Young, how is Queensland placed in terms of ramping up elective surgery, after yesterday?

DR YOUNG:

Yes, so that announcement was made by National Cabinet and at the moment we're working through that process, how to effectively ramp it up so that we manage it.

REPORTER:

The advice a few weeks ago was only to leave home for those four reasons, so is it ok for Queenslanders to go and visit friends and family for social visits if they keep with that two-person visitor?

DR YOUNG:

That's correct, yes. As long as they keep in their own community. I don't want to see people in one community going a long distance to another community because we know, and you'll see that on that website that's being launched today, you'll be able to see there are some parts of the state with a lot more cases than other parts. So it's really important that we don't move the virus from one part of the state to another, so people should stay in their own community.

REPORTER:

There was a report out of Sydney today that every Sydney sider, I think, would be tested before restrictions are lifted. Is that a possibility?

DR YOUNG:

I haven't seen those reports, and I think that would not be possible with our current consumables, and not necessary. So we're focusing on people who are unwell in Queensland. So anyone who lives in Brisbane, the Gold Coast or Cairns who's unwell with any symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 can get tested, and I actually encourage them to get tested, and then outside those areas, if people have any links to travel or they've been inter-state it's important that they get tested, and then there are also occupational groups – so healthcare workers, aged care workers, police, teachers, that we also recommend they get tested. But essentially, if a GP thinks that someone should be tested, they should go ahead and test.

REPORTER:

International research shows that as many as 78 per cent of cases could be asymptomatic, since the State introduced that serology testing on Monday, how many of those serology tests have been done, and do you think we need to start doing random serology testing in communities to see if there's a high level of asymptomatic instances?

DR YOUNG:

So that's part of the surveillance plan that AHPPC is putting together to go to National Cabinet. So there'll be a decision made as part of the Prime Minister's statement that there were three conditions that needed to be in place before restrictions could be lifted, and one of those is a surveillance plan, so that work is being done at the moment.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

DR YOUNG:

Yeah, three of those tests – we only started serology testing here in Queensland on Monday and we've done over 100, and three of those were positive.

REPORTER:

Premier, if I could just ask you – the Opposition is campaigning hard saying that the Government is not allowing these oversight committees, they're not allowed to put up motions. Do you think Parliament sitting today is fair?

PREMIER:

Yeah, I do, Josh, because today is about urgent COVID business. It's no different to what the Federal Parliament has done, it's no different to what the Victorian Parliament is going to do or other jurisdictions. And like I said, we'll be back to normal business is my preference during the next week of Parliament which will be next month.

REPORTER:

Put in place a sitting here, not a virtual sitting?

PREMIER:

Well it just depends. It depends on the health advice, so where we can bring people down from the regions we will definitely try to do so if the advice permits that, otherwise we have to make sure that we do have other options available so all of our Members can actually participate.

REPORTER:

There was a story today of a Queensland doctor who's been told by her landlord she must either stop going to work or move out of the sharehouse where she lives because of concerns of her exposure to COVID-19. What are her current rights or protections?

PREMIER:

I'd prefer to have a look at that, Sonia, rather than making... If that's alright?

REPORTER:

Premier, you've got two new MPs coming into the House today – pretty odd circumstances to be coming in?

PREMIER:

It's very odd because the way in which they will be sworn in is going to be different as well. So I do want to thank everyone for the social distancing measures that have been put into the Queensland Parliament, and of course we welcome the two new Members, the Member for Bundamba and the Member for Currumbin today to the Queensland Parliament.

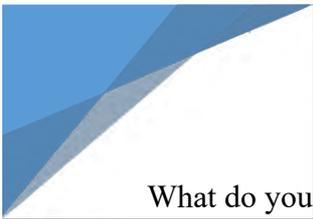
REPORTER:

[inaudible] COVID Bills coming in today, and do you worry about a downgrading in credit rating or is this just money you have to spend?

PREMIER:

We have to. We are making sure that we are only spending money where we absolutely have to. Of course, the appropriations Bill will be debated first up today and the Deputy Premier will have carriage of that, and of course we're very conscious as well about what the rating agencies say. So, very measured, very responsible, and absolutely responding to these unique set of circumstances that Queensland never thought that we'd have to face.

REPORTER:



Transcript

What do you make of the gun sale ban being politically motivated? There's suggestions that the ban on gun sales is not driven by the panic stuff.

PREMIER:

I'll have to look into that, Lydia. Ok, thank you. Sorry, we've got Parliament.

[ENDS]

Released under RTI - DPC

Engagement: Press conference

Speaker/s: Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk, Brent McCracken – Lifeline, Minister Steven Miles, Chief Health Officer Dr Jeanette Young

Date: 23 April 2020

Duration: 19 minutes 20 seconds

E&OE

PREMIER:

Overnight we've had two confirmed cases, and that is of course still good news for Queensland. So, once again, thank you very much everyone and we know the sources of those two confirmed cases as well. That takes our total to 1026, and of course, we have conducted more than 90,000 tests across Queensland. Today I want to talk about Legacy and Lifeline. Lifeline has seen an unprecedented number of calls during this time, during COVID-19, and they are receiving around 24,000 calls a week. So, it is up quite substantially, and we have Brent here with us here today who will talk to you a little bit more about they types of calls that they're getting and the huge increase of volume. Of course, we want to support Lifeline during this period, so we will be allocated \$3.5 million to assist Lifeline during this time. And in the lead up to Anzac Day too, we've been approached by Legacy, Legacy does outstanding work in the local community providing services to families of former or serving soldiers who pass away and we will be allocating \$1 million to Legacy as well. So, I think everyone would agree with me, extremely worthy organisations that deserve government support during this time. So look, I might just hand over to Brent to say a few words about Lifeline and then you'll hear from the Health Minister and then of course, Dr Young.

BRENT McCRACKEN:

Good morning everybody. I'd like to thank the Premier and the Queensland Government for their incredible contribution to Lifeline services. Lifeline funds its services through its retail network, which has needed to close over recent times, so our revenue has dramatically shrunk. Queensland Government has stepped forward to be able to provide us with significant funds to keep our services going at a time that demand is going through the roof. Lifeline experienced the greatest number of calls in its 56 years' in March, and our biggest day in our history on Good Friday as we saw people really struggling with loneliness and isolation exacerbating the circumstances that they're in. We've been able to bring on more volunteers and increase our capacity to answer calls through volunteers and paid staff, and the funds that the government has provided to us will mean that we can further enhance our capacity to be able to answer any call. We want to make sure that anybody who picks up the phone and calls us on our 13 11 14 number gets answered, that we are able to respond to their need at the time that they call us. And so, we look forward to being able to look at how we use this

money to make sure that 24 hours a day, seven days a week, when people are in crisis that they have us to turn to, and that we're able to respond in a way that helps them find a way forward from whatever circumstances they're in. So again, thank you very much Premier.

REPORTER:

Can I just ask, what sort of people these are, and what are they asking or looking for?

BRENT McCracken:

They're everybody, I think, because what all of us are experiencing is this crisis is impacting on us in different ways and different times. But what they are, are people who really often find that they don't have anybody else to turn to and they often don't know how to move forward in life. So we're really working with people around some very basic things about getting routine into their days, turning off the news if they're continually hearing about the crisis, thinking about their own health and reaching out to others. Making a plan about how they're going to spend their day so that they can see some positive in life.

REPORTER:

You wouldn't necessarily normally see...

BRENT McCracken:

I think we are seeing numbers which suggest that more and more people are calling us who wouldn't have traditionally called us. And that is not surprising, many people are facing circumstances that they could never have envisaged being in, so losing their business, losing their job, finding themselves without other people around them, having a lack of social contact. The theme that we're hearing a lot is how lonely people are, how isolated people are and in this sort of crisis people in day-to-day life might be able to get through without feeling too concerned, but at this point in time many people feel like their life is becoming worthless.

REPORTER:

So it cuts across demographics?

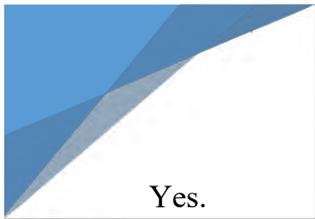
BRENT McCracken:

Lifeline has always received calls from people across the spectrum, because thinking about suicide and about experience crisis doesn't hit anyone group in particular, it hits all of us at different times. But clearly, now we're seeing this really picked up by a broader array of people. So, we are very conscious of making sure that we're supporting people who might have chronic mental health issues – who may be regular callers to us – but also being conscious that for the first time many people are picking up that phone and dialling us and that we want to make sure that we're there, we're on the end of the phone and being able to give them good support in being able to try and deal through whatever difficulties they're facing.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

BRENT McCracken:



Yes.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

BRENT McCracken:

There's always some calls that won't be answered, because we can't always predict when surges will occur. But in general, we have been answering around 90 per cent of calls straight away, as they come in, we're a national network and Queensland contributes an enormous amount to that national network, so when there's overflow in one state, it does go to counsellors in other states. But in general, we have this amazing thing going on, which is volunteers are really stepping up their hours, so where somebody might have done a four hour shift once a week before, they're now doing two or three shifts to build the capacity. I can't tell you how much pride I have the volunteers and paid staff we have and being really able to step forward and make a difference.

REPORTER:

And that number from March – the greatest in history – that's just for Queensland?

BRENT McCracken:

That's across the nation.

REPORTER:

And you mentioned Good Friday was a very busy day, do you know how many calls came through?

BRENT McCracken:

I know that we're hitting peaks of about 3200 calls on those big days, and so that day would've been around that number.

REPORTER:

What sort of signs should people be looking out for, in terms of keeping an eye on people who are close to them?

BRENT McCracken:

I think that is right, it's a time now for everybody to reach out to their friends and neighbours and others. That's difficult with the social distancing, but there's a variety of ways we can do it, and we are encouraging people who are ringing us to also reach out. Acts of kindness can make you feel much better, as well as the person who receives that act of kindness. So, we are encouraging people everywhere to think about those people who are around them, people who might be on the periphery of their friendship group and just checking in that they're okay, and they get support. And of course, where people are stressed, encouraging them to call us, we'll be able to help them through whatever their circumstances are.

REPORTER:



Thanks Brent.

MINISTER MILES:

Thanks Brent, thank you Premier. As the Premier outlined, we have sustained that very low number of positive cases here in Queensland, just two cases confirmed overnight, bringing our total to 1026. One of them is a Queensland resident in Western Australia, the other is a contact of a known positive COVID case. We currently have 20 Queenslanders in hospital suffering from COVID-19. Seven are in intensive care and six are ventilated. Yesterday we performed 2539 tests, which means we are sustaining that very low percentage of positive testing rate. I just want to say how important our NGO partners, like Lifeline and Legacy, are to our health services ability to support Queenslanders. People need to be able to access supports in the community before they reach mental health crisis, when they do reach mental health crisis, they often require emergency care from either our paramedics or emergency departments, or both. Our paramedics are seeing a 12 to 15 per cent increase in Queenslanders suffering from mental health crisis: depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation or self harm, and that is obviously driving the workload for them, as well as tragic impact on those Queenslanders and their families.

DR YOUNG:

Overnight we saw two new cases and both of those were linked to other cases or indeed, acquired overseas. So that is very, very good news. So that means that Queenslanders are continuing to follow those extraordinarily onerous requirements. It's important that we continue those as we go forward because we know that we could rapidly unravel were we to change what we were doing in a way that didn't continue to maintain those restrictions where they were needed. So that's very important. We haven't seen any additional cases up in Cairns which is very good news. The hospital up there has done a fantastic job to make sure that all of the staff coming into the hospital are well and just working through all of their systems, so that also is good news.

REPORTER:

Dr Young, your South Australian counterpart has apparently said "Schools are fine", urging parents to send their kids back to school. Can you understand some parents here questioning why that isn't the case here?

DR YOUNG:

Yeah in Queensland we were at a different stage when those decisions were being made. South Australia has seen fewer cases than we were seeing in Queensland. It was really, really important in Queensland that we take that very difficult and tough decision, which our Premier did take, based on my advice that we needed to look throughout society where we could minimise movement and minimise contact. And as a result of all that work, we're now seeing the results. So we've had two cases overnight, in the last 24 hours. We had none before that, six before, none before that. And that's because of all of that work. And because of that we can now as we move forward, and we know National Cabinet is doing this, we can look at what restrictions we can safely remove. We're in such a good position compared to those awful, awful images coming out of other countries overseas. I mean, when we look at

what's happening in America, that is tragic. When we're looking at what's happening in the UK and in Europe – because of all of the hard work that's been done by every Queenslander in this state – and I emphasise, it's every Queenslander that's been following this, we then have the luxury of being able to look what we can do going forward. But those decisions that were made had to be made at that time otherwise we could have been where some of those other countries are. I know I put out some of those statistics of where we could have been and thank goodness, we're not there.

REPORTER:

Do you think we could review it before May 15 in terms of schools reopening?

DR YOUNG:

I think we need to continue to just methodically look at what we're doing. We've only had these really good numbers in the last four or five days, so we just need to make sure that they're all ok before we go and make any major changes.

REPORTER:

Just on that Western Australia case, was that person on one of the cruise ships?

DR YOUNG:

I don't know that. We only found that information this morning so now we'll go and find out where they contracted it. But they contracted it overseas so it could well have been one of the cruise ships.

REPORTER:

Dr, what's your advice on the NRL being able to play here in the state?

DR YOUNG:

I mean, sport is such an important part of our culture in Australia. And you would remember that one of the exemptions that we gave here in Queensland, based on national advice, was for people to exercise. So a lot of other countries didn't allow that exemption. Now people have done that so sensibly and that's why we can look at other restrictions possibly changing. So sport, both for individuals as part of their normal lives and that elite sport, is really, really important so I do actually look forward to receiving a detailed plan from NRL and from other codes when they've put one together as to how we could work through it.

REPORTER:

What about exemptions for funerals? I understand that quite a fair few have been knocked back and some are being let through.

DR YOUNG:

Yes. So now that we've got more information. I was very concerned early on about funerals because we saw in South Korea that was actually one of the major drivers to their cases. Because you can imagine, no matter how you say it to it people...here today, we're all

beautifully maintaining 1.5 metre distance. That's very good – how do you do that at a funeral? It's really hard. You can say to people they need to but it's difficult. That's why National Cabinet came out with that idea of limiting it to 10 people to try and then limit the number of people who then might get a coronavirus infection if there was someone there. So to limit it to 10. Now I did early, prior to a lot of those restrictions being put in place, make some decisions to allow larger numbers and fortunately we can see that we didn't have outbreaks because of that. But then, as we got more cases in Queensland and we went through that period of having significant numbers of cases, I pulled back. But did allow up to 20 people mainly for the reason you can actually go and contact 20 people very quickly and manage it. So that's where we've really landed at the moment that for people that are able to put in place system so that they do manage the contact and do manage that 1.5 metre distance at all times while they're holding the funeral and that they do know everyone who attends the funeral so we can very rapidly contact them if there were a case; and they do provide hand sanitizer and make sure that no one who attends the funeral is unwell. Because although we know you can transmit COVID-19 when you don't have symptoms, that's unlikely, it's usually when you've got symptoms. So as long as no one is unwell when they attend, that I have started to provide more exemptions up to that 20 limit. Now that 20 I think is a balance because I must admit, it's one of the hardest decisions that I make. I get a lot of requests every day to provide exemptions for funerals. It's a very difficult process because it's so hard for the families at that time. But I have felt that 20 with all those other requirements in place can be managed safely.

REPORTER:

Premier can I just ask you? Talking about funerals, the Prime Minister last night got emotional talking about families not being able to say goodbye to loved ones. On a personal level how difficult has it been for you to make some of these tough decisions that you know are going to hurt people?

PREMIER:

It's very hard. Of course, it's extremely tough and everyone's human so everyone has different reactions. You know, to think that we can't have the celebrations of a large wedding. Like Dr Young said, you can't have funerals. I mean I talked about that in the Parliament last night as well. I know personally, my electorate officer lost her partner and some of her family members couldn't attend and that was heartbreaking. And some of her other family members I know very well. So, it is tough, but we've got to get through this. And what we are now seeing, what Dr Young said, is that we actually seeing this flattening of the curve but we need to keep it up over the next few weeks.

REPORTER:

...have you seen a plan from them? Has anyone approached you?

PREMIER:

There is no detailed plan. So I call on the NRL to submit that detailed plan and I will immediately forward it to Dr Young for her consideration and report back to me.

REPORTER:

What do you think of the prospect though of the three Queensland teams operating south of the border?

PREMIER:

I have not seen any detailed plan josh so I'm saying to the NRL – send the detailed plan. Send all of your health information. Send how it's all going to work. Put it in a detailed plan and I'm more the happy to forward it to Dr Young. And Dr Young has said today she is more than happy to consider it.

REPORTER:

Would you have expected they would have given you a plan by now?

PREMIER:

I think they've been dealing with the New South Wales Government so I think they need to submit it to all other governments that have NRL teams that would be part of....

REPORTER:

With the border restrictions, there's no way the teams could play here in Queensland is there? They'd all have to be based in New South Wales presumably.

PREMIER:

Well there are some Queensland teams here so let's see what can happen. I don't want to speculate until I see the detailed plan. So, if everyone can just wait until we get the detailed plans, let Dr Young consider it. But the sooner they get it in the better it will be.

REPORTER:

The Melbourne Airport boss said Virgin had been disadvantaged having its headquarters here in Brisbane and should go down to Sydney or Melbourne. What do you make of that?

PREMIER:

I think that is absolutely ridiculous. Virgin's headquarters are here, they should stay here and we will fight to keep them here because we need it for our regional communities.

REPORTER:

Premier, all the measures passed last night...

PREMIER:

Yes.

REPORTER:

Do you know...will all of those measures be funded? Will it go into debt? And do you know how much of that will be debt?

PREMIER:

Look, later on this year the Treasurer will make either a mini-budget or an economic statement to the Parliament. We're still working out those details as to when that would be. But the measures we took are absolutely needed. We need to keep the economy going. We need to keep people as much as possible in work and help people. We also need to make sure we've got money for our hospitals. We need to make sure that families out there are getting relief as well for household costs. So that package was very measured, it's very responsible and Moody's have reflected that as well in their comments that they've made. And we have diversified economy. Thank god we live in Queensland and we have such a diversified economy.

REPORTER:

And just on regional fuel prices. Have you heard about reports of gouging in regional centres?

PREMIER:

No, I haven't, I'm happy to have a look at that but in most places fuel costs are quite low at the moment. I know we discussed that at National Cabinet as well. Alright thank you.

[ENDS]



Station: 7 News

Transcript

Program: Press Conference

Interviewee: Steven Miles, Minister for Health

Yvette D'Ath, Attorney-General

Dr Jeanette Young, Chief Health Officer

Date: 24 April 2020

Duration: 32 mins 31 sec

E&OE

MINISTER MILES:

Today, I can again confirm very low numbers of positive COVID-19 cases. Just two cases confirmed overnight. Both with overseas travel history. That is both acquired COVID-19 overseas with some adjustments to numbers in earlier days, that brings us to a total of 1026 cases. We have now tested more than 90,000 people and have taken nearly 95,000 tests. That reduction in numbers is starting to flow through in a reduction of patients in our hospitals. We now have just 18 inpatients, of which six are intensive care and all are currently being ventilated.

Today we'd like to update you on four important elements of our response to COVID-19. First of all, we've said all along that expanding testing was absolutely crucial and you would have seen us gradually expanding our testing capability, expanding our testing platforms and expanding as we do our testing criteria so that we continue to test a high number of people so that we can be sure that we are identifying all of our cases of COVID-19 and the Chief Health Officer in a moment will outline how we intend to further expand the testing criteria tight across the state to allow us to sustain that high level of COVID-19 testing.

The second is contact tracing. Every single time we find somebody with COVID-19, we need to find out first where they got it from and second who they may have given it to. Our public health units have been working around for 86 days now and I'm pleased that the Attorney-General has led a process to identify other public servants who can be trained and deployed into those roles, in the first instance to relieve the pressure on our existing public health staff but off course if needed down the track will mean that we have a large pool of trained contact tracers who can do that incredibly important work.

The third element is quarantine. This is people who we think are at a high heightened risk of contracting COVID-19, either because they've travelled to somewhere where its widespread or they have been in contact with somebody who we know has had COVID-19 and those quarantine measures that we put in place very early have paid a massive dividend. 375 of our just over a 1000 of cases were confirmed as positive while in quarantine. That's 375 people who could have been spreading the virus out there to two or three others, who would have

then spread it to two or three others, who didn't because they were in quarantine and the Attorney will outline further measures that have been put in place and update you on how effective those measures are and have been.

And finally, we've been enhancing our rapid response capability so that when we have a high risk event, an event that could cause a major outbreak, that we can respond quickly and at scale and that mechanism, that process has been tested recently in response to the Cairns Pathology Laboratory and has been incredibly effective and the Chief Health Officer will outline for you just how effective that has been.

Finally, I'd like to advise just how successful the website we launched the day before yesterday has been. That's the website that allows people to see their local area and how many COVID cases have been there, whether they have recovered or whether they are active. As of yesterday afternoon, 150,000 Queenslanders had visited that web page. It went within a day to the number one Queensland Government web page and people spent on average more than 10 minutes on that page at a time demonstrating just how high the interest of Queenslanders is in this and reinforcing how engaged people are and what a great job they are doing complying with our public health directions.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

Thank you Minister. As we heard, it is so important that we make sure that our health professionals are given the opportunity to do what they do best and that is identify people who have COVID-19, to trace others that may be at risk of having COVID-19 and our job is to make sure everyone's complying with those directions so that we don't see a spread of this virus across the Queensland community.

So, we know in January, the Premier led the way in responding to and putting in place initiatives to deal with COVID-19 to protect Queenslanders. In early April, the Premier tasked me with setting up a taskforce to enhance our contact tracing capability and to monitor and enforce compliance of those public health directives.

57,000 people have been in isolation or in quarantine since this started in Queensland. 57,000 people who either had COVID-19, had come in contact with someone with COVID-19 or was at a high risk of having COVID-19 because of where they had travelled from. To these 57,000 people we say thank you. Thank you for complying with the directions that has resulted in the flattening of the curve that we've been seeing and an extremely low level of transmission in the community.

But it's important we understand the job is not over. There is 3,500 people today under either an isolation order, which means they have COVID-19 and they're not in hospital, they are at home being cared for through virtual wards through our hospitals and people who are under quarantine orders that are required at law to stay home, to not leave their premises and not allow any visitors to visit them during their 14 days of quarantine.

What these 3,500 people do and everyone person who goes into isolation or quarantine over the coming days, weeks and months will decide the future of Queensland's health. It is in their hands whether this virus spreads throughout our community. So, we thank them for their compliance but we require their compliance at law because five million Queenslanders



health is in the hands of the 3,500 people who are required to be staying at home at law. This isn't optional, we need you, Queenslanders need you to comply

But we're not just relying on good faith and trust that people are going to do as we ask. That is why this taskforce was established. We cannot relax now; the Palaszczuk Government is taking every action we can to ensure that we're monitoring and enforcing compliance with these individuals. We know that they're up to the job, we know Queenslanders can do it. We say thank you. We say thank you on behalf of the people of Queensland for complying, for staying home over those 14 days. We are doing everything we can to support you in your 14 days, through the Care Army we will make sure you get food, you get medicine, you get the support that you need so that you can stay at home in those 14 days as we require.

Now we know a long weekend is coming up, so we say to those 3500 Queenslanders who are on isolation and quarantine orders, please, do it for the five million Queenslanders. Just stay home. So today I can announce we are currently training 500 additional public servants to be ready to stand up at a moment's notice to enhance our contact tracing with our public health units across Queensland. Since the establishment of the taskforce, we have established ongoing compliance and monitoring of every single person on a quarantine order. These people are now receiving multiple texts and phone calls and compliance visits. Since the 3rd of April, we have seen over 2000 SMS texts, we have made 3410 contact calls to people in quarantine, and we have commenced an in-field police compliance blitz on people in quarantine to ensure they are following the law and staying at home.

Our first blitz was held on Monday of this week, we saw Queensland Police Service knock on 158 homes to check whether people were complying. I am very pleased to say, what that blitz showed is 147 people were at home and complying with their order. There was only eight non-compliant, six of those people had left the address in which they had been quarantined to return to New South Wales. Two had left to seek medical treatment, three additional ones are currently under investigation, include one person who was not found at their location.

As much as these statistics are fantastic, we want to make sure we have 100 per cent compliance with these directions; we don't want anyone leaving their house unless they are getting health treatment. Someone on a quarantine order who is feeling unwell will contact 13 HEALTH, or a fever clinic, or a GP and organise to go and get tested to see if they're positive. Because as we have heard the Health Minister say, there is a number of people who were found positive with COVID-19 who had been on quarantine and are now in isolation. I remind every Queenslanders who is required to go into isolation or quarantine, that you could get a \$1300 fine, or worse still, up to a \$13,000 fine if you are found in breach of these orders.

So we do thank the thousands of people who have been compliant, we thank those who are currently in isolation and quarantine, and we thank those who will go into isolation and quarantine over the coming weeks and months. We thank you for your compliance because five million Queenslanders lives are in your hands. You decide whether this virus gets spread through Queensland or not. Just simply, stay at home, that's what we're calling on you to do. Any questions for myself or Steven, or the CHO?

REPORTER:

The one person that you mentioned that wasn't at home, have you found him or her?

ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

The police are still investigating that one.

REPORTER:

Okay, and was that person... did they have the virus or they were just told to stay home for protection?

ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

They were in quarantine, they were in quarantine, so they don't have the virus at this stage. They are in quarantine because they are at risk of potentially having the virus. I should say, this blitz we conducted on Monday is on top of random visits the police are already doing based on complaints from the public about suspected breaches, and other suspected breaches that we identify through our calls, through our new call centre. So, the message is, at any point in your 14 days of quarantine, you could have a police officer or an enforcement officer knocking on your door.

REPORTER:

How worried are you, if this drags on that people are going to start... that these rates could get worse and people could start breaking out?

ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

Well there's no doubt that if people don't comply with their isolation or quarantine directions, there could absolutely a transmission more broadly in the community, especially those who are already tested positive. So we are putting our faith in all of these people to make sure they stay at home. They're putting not only themselves at risk, but people throughout their family and their friends and their community, so it is extremely important, as you can see through the map that I have up near me, those dots are all of the people in quarantine across Queensland. So that shows that there are people in quarantine right across Queensland, so we need all Queenslanders to comply with their quarantine directions.

REPORTER:

We are starting to see some easing of restrictions, for example, remedial massage and things like that, can you give us any other light at the end of the tunnel of any other things that you could potentially be looking at if people do adhere to these restrictions?

ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

I might hand back to the Health Minister or the Chief Health Officer to talk about any restrictions, easing of restrictions, but I'll say this, that the National Cabinet, the Prime Minister, the Premier of Queensland has made it very clear that our future in relation to our health and keeping those most at risk, those vulnerable in our population alive, is dependent on keeping the transmission of this virus down and we need more contact tracing, we need more testing and we need more monitoring and ensuring compliance of these directions to control all that, so that any easing of restrictions can occur going forward. So all of those

restrictions are contingent on compliance. We have the best contact tracing in the country. Other states have used our model, our training to set up their contact tracing units, so we lead the way in Australia. And what we are doing here, again, is leading Australia in monitoring, and compliance and enforcement and making sure that we have the ability to rapidly expand contact tracing if we need to. We all hope we don't need to, but that will be very much contingent on the people in Queensland who are in isolation and quarantine.

DR YOUNG:

So, we saw two new cases overnight, both of them acquired overseas so that is really good news. Now as you've heard the Prime Minister talk, there are three things we need to put in place before we can consider easing restrictions. The first is to increase the surveillance and testing. The second is to look at contact tracing and make sure that we have that in place with compliance, and the third is to have rapid response teams in place.

So for the first of those, to increase testing, I've asked today here in Queensland that every single person in the state who has any symptom suggestive of COVID-19, any acute respiratory symptoms of cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, to immediately be tested. So that is in place as of today across the whole state. So you would remember I did have it in place for Brisbane, Gold Coast and Cairns, but now it'll be across the state so that we start to meet that first requirement which is to increase testing, and the most important part of that is testing people who are unwell.

So I ask all Queenslanders, if you're unwell with any symptoms of acute respiratory disease, please come forward and be tested, see your GP or go to a fever clinic or go to a local hospital, whatever is easiest for you to do, and be tested. Now we can do that for a couple of reasons. One, we've got enormous capacity in Queensland to test. It's been gradually increasing and now we have it in place so that is really good. Secondly, we are seeing very little respiratory disease in our community today, which you would expect because people are not mingling, so they're not spreading other viruses. So in actual fact the number of people who will need testing is quite small. Third, we have seen a steady decline in testing because people are not sick. So now we need to increase that and just make sure that wherever you are in the state that you come forward and get tested because we know that's the most important thing to do.

Now when you come forward to be tested, of course, you need to then remain in your home or wherever you are, isolate yourself until you get the result. That's really important. And we know that if you come forward and if it's COVID-19 then the quicker you isolate yourself when you're unwell the better. It's really important that you don't go to work, you don't go to school, you don't go out in the community – you isolate yourself at home. And people are already doing that. We're seeing that in the results. Over the last week we've had so few cases and the ones we have had have mainly been acquired overseas, and that shows as well that our quarantine policy is working because more of our cases are being picked up in quarantine. So we're working out who's at risk of developing COVID-19 disease, and we're asking those people to quarantine. Thank you.

REPORTER:

Peter Dutton is saying that the schools are remaining open only to essential workers' children essentially because the Government's scared about pissing off the unions. But it isn't really the Premier's decision, it's your health advice and your decision that schools are open like this, is that correct?

DR YOUNG:

That's correct. So, in Queensland we're actually open to more than just the children of essential workers, we're also open to those vulnerable children. We know there are vulnerable children in our communities and our principals have been working with families where they think it is best for those children to go to school. So we've had that, and you would have heard from the Premier that we have a plan in place for when we'll review when we need to broaden the number of children who attend school. It's really important that, although they're extremely onerous, and I don't underestimate how onerous the conditions that people are living under at the moment are, it's important that we think very strategically about when we're going to lift the restrictions and what needs to be done to be able to do it. So that's why I've come out today and said really, please, if you're unwell, no matter where you are in the state, with any respiratory symptoms come forward and be tested. That will help us then when it comes to a decision about when it's safe to start removing some of the restrictions that are in place.

REPORTER:

Dr Young, Dan Tehan wants schools open to everyone, basically normal school life at the start of June. Is that possible?

DR YOUNG:

It might be possible. Let's wait and see. Rather than predict the future, let's take it one step at a time. Let's put in place this additional testing. I don't think it'll lead to any additional cases because I think we've got very wide testing at the moment. But let's see what the results are before we decide on conclusions.

REPORTER:

What is the health advice that you've given the Premier that schools can't open to everyone at the moment?

DR YOUNG:

The advice I gave was quite early on in that we had to immediately restrict the amount of movement in our community and we needed to tackle all aspects off life in our community. And schools of course are a very, very important aspect of normal life, so we had to do something fast, because you would remember we were having a rapid escalation in the number of cases and we had to get on top of that as quickly as we could.

REPORTER:

What do you say to the Teachers' Union who has threatened to shut down schools to all but essential workers if attendance levels continue to rise?

DR YOUNG:

That means we just have to work with them about what this means. They're concerned as I think every single person in Queensland is, that this might get out of hand. And they are seeing the same images that I'm seeing every single day of what's going on in New York, what's going in Italy, in England, and they're terrifying images. So they are concerned that they don't want restrictions too quickly, and that's what we're doing here in Queensland. We are methodically looking at what we can do, and before we can go and lift any restrictions we need to increase the amount of testing we're doing. So please, everyone in Queensland, to help us be able to consider lifting some of these very onerous restrictions, could you please come forward and get tested.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] Anzac Day flyover, I understand is cancelled for tomorrow. What are the health reasons for that?

DR YOUNG:

Anzac Day is a really, really important time in our community to honour our veterans. It's extremely important, and I had a discussion with the President of the RSL about what could we all do to really make sure we honour our veterans but don't increase the risk to our veterans and our general community. Not all our veterans, but a lot of them are very much in that vulnerable group, so I really would not like to see them leaving their homes, and I know they do every single Anzac Day. You see those fantastic parades, they're absolutely wonderful, but this is not the year to do it. So the RSL have come out with a fantastic idea that I'm certainly going to participate in and I hope it might continue into future years, I think it's delightful – where the RSL is saying “Go to the end of your drive and light up the dawn”. And I'd encourage every single Queenslander if they're able to do that to do exactly that. Go to the end of their drive, light up the dawn with a torch and participate in that service that will be live from the website. So I've had a look at it, go and look at it, you can download it and you can participate. It would be a fantastic thing to stand at the end of your drive and to see all of the neighbours around you participating in that. And that's what I encourage every single Queenslander if they're able to do, to do it. It will make a very, very special year this year and we all need something special as we go through this pandemic. So that's what I encourage people to do. There is no health risk for someone getting in a plane, of course there isn't. But the health risk is that if one person does that then someone else will say “well maybe there's no health risk if I go on...” some other things I've been asked to approve – if I go on a drive through, if I do this...and yes, if you looked at each individual thing in isolation you'd say that's fine, that's fine and that's fine but add them all up together and then you've then got a major problem. So the best thing, really and truly, is please everyone go to the end of your drive at 6am on Saturday morning and honour our veterans.

REPORTER:

The NRL says that it's working on the plan. Have you heard from them yet?

DR YOUNG:

I haven't and I look forward to seeing it. As I said yesterday sport is so important in our culture. And you would have seen one of the things I stressed right at the start of all of this

was to allow people to leave their home to exercise. That wasn't the case in many, many other countries. And I was a bit worried about it to be honest with you, of course I was. But we haven't seen any growth in cases so that was absolutely fine to do. So I continue to encourage people to leave their own home within their own community to exercise. And sport at all levels is so important to us as Queenslanders, as Australians. We see that all the time, so I am looking forward to seeing that plan from the NRL

REPORTER:

Have there been any developments with that cluster at Cairns Hospital?

DR YOUNG:

No which is actually very, very good news. So it looks like – it's still a bit early to totally sign off on it, we'll continue to do more work – but it looks like at the moment there were those two confirmed cases and another three potential cases so a total of five. But we will continue to work through because it's not yet over. As you know, there's that incubation period that's always important to look at.

REPORTER:

One more on aged care – can the Queensland Health force aged care homes to allow visitors?

DR YOUNG:

No we can't but I am strongly encouraging them to allow visitors. I think the aged care industry does a brilliant job. They look after the most vulnerable people in our society. And when this was all unrolling, they looked at what the risks were, and they took decisions to best protect their residents. Now that we don't have those increasing numbers of cases and we're not seeing community spread I think they can all go back and look at those things that they put in place and see if they're still necessary. Because it is so important that our older members of society can still engage with their families.

REPORTER:

Minister, the DG for your department said the reason this lab IT project's been discontinued is so pathology services aren't affected during the pandemic. If that is the reason will it be picked up again after the pandemic's over? And if not, why not?

MINISTER MILES:

That particular project was already under review. The legacy product that is currently in all of our labs had its support period extended from 2019 to 2029. That platform is stable. It's well supported by users and so for that reason the Governance Board was already considering, already reviewing that project. Then of course, COVID-19 came along which made the decision relatively easy. The middle of a pandemic was never going to be the time to change our laboratory system. That's the reason that project's been suspended.

REPORTER:

Is that still the project that was identified as being a risky IT project back in 2012?

MINISTER MILES:

It was considered that in 2012 because at that stage the support period for the existing product expired in 2019. In the meantime the existing product support period was extended to 2029 making it viable for a further 10 years.

REPORTER:

Unemployment across regional Queensland has gone through the roof. Apparently, the Wide Bay has doubled. Are you concerned about that?

MINISTER MILES:

Of course I'm concerned about that. The economic impact of this crisis has been, for me, heartbreaking. To know people in jobs who thought they'd never be unemployed. To people who've built up businesses and lost them overnight. Of course that's devastating. But as I've said before it's not as though this was a choice between the economy and saving lives. Those places where they've seen massive loss of life have also seen massive economic impacts and I think in the long run will see worse economic impacts. So the choices we've made in Queensland, while they've been hard, I think ultimately will end up having been the right decisions not just for the sake of the tens of thousands of lives saved but also for the opportunity for economic recovery.

REPORTER:

I have one last question for the AG – not corona related. What does the ECQ's report say into the council election IT issues?

ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

Well as...hopefully people have seen when Parliament sat on Wednesday this has been referred to a Parliamentary Committee. So there's an independent review that will now be conducted by the Parliamentary Committee for them to report back in June in relation to the online publishing of results on the night and subsequent days after the local government and the two by-elections in Queensland that was held on the 28th of March.

REPORTER:

When will the public get to know? Is it after the committee reports back with the results?

ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

The committee will report back and that report will be published as all Parliamentary Committee reports are.

REPORTER:

Actually sorry, I've got one more question for the Minister

MINISTER MILES:

I hope it's a good one

REPORTER:

This I not a tricky one – so a big spike in the number of virtual consults with doctors, especially in quarantine hotels. First of all, are you hopeful that this will continue? Has it been a major development, a positive silver lining of this whole thing?

MINISTER MILES:

It has been. One of the legacies of this pandemic will be a change in the way we access healthcare, I hope, forever. Queensland because of our regional nature, our dispersed nature we've led the world in tele-health and video conference consultations but we've not been able to expand that into our metropolitan areas nor to access to GP's and nurses and the expansion of tele-health has been huge. Some of our hospitals are doing 60...70 even more per cent of their specialist appointments by telephone. You can't do everything by telephone and video conference, but you can do lots and lots. And ultimately that's more convenient for patients. They can stay home, they can do it from their workplace. If what they need is a simple medical certificate or a script repeat they can do that very simply over the phone. And I think this will, ultimately, be seen as a revolution in how we access healthcare. It's certainly something we have been arguing for for some time and really grateful for how our clinicians have embraced it. Thank you.

[ENDS]

Released under RIA 2009

Event: Press Conference

Speaker/s: Queensland Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk; Health Minister Steven Miles; Dr Jeannette Young, Chief Health Officer and Steve Gollschewski, State Disaster Coordinator

Airdate: Sunday 26th April 2020

Duration: 28 minutes 21 seconds

E&OE

PREMIER:

Hello, good morning everyone. Okay well first of all can I just thank the Queensland public for honouring Anzac Day yesterday. There were thousands of families standing in their driveways showing their respects, and it would be wonderful to see that continue each Anzac Day as a commemoration.

Well today, we have some more good news, only three positive cases overnight, taking our total to 1030 and more than 98,000 tests so once again our test rate is extremely high.

And some more good news, Queenslanders are really doing a great job of listening and following the directions and we are releasing the flattening of the curve. But today I can announce some good news for Queensland. Because we have done such a terrific job of flattening the curve, in discussions with the Chief Health Officer, from next Friday, we will be able to lift some of the stay-at-home restrictions. And can I say, this is a very small step and one that we really need the public to 100 per cent cooperate with because if we do see mass gatherings, I will not hesitate to clamp back down.

So, from midnight on Friday, we will be able to leave our homes for some forms of recreation. You will be able to go for a drive. If you are over 65 or over 70, and I know it is really difficult for people being at home for long extended periods of time, I would suggest going for a drive during the week, Monday to Friday, because on the weekends, it is family time and you will not be in contact with children, who are either being home schooled or children of essential workers at school. Families will be able to have picnics. I think this is a positive move, so it is members of the same household. Members of the same household can go and have a picnic or, if you are single, you can go with one other person, and the Chief Health Officer will expand on this further.

You will be able to go shopping for non-essential items, like clothes and shoes. So at the moment, people are going out for essential items like going to the pharmacy and going to the grocery store, well, you will now be able to go to get a pair of shoes or to get a new shirt but, once again, we do not want you spending hours in those shopping areas. It is about making a list and going there, getting what you need and then coming home. Also, you will be able to go to national parks. We will be re-opening the national parks but the day use areas will not be open, nor will the toilets, and I hope these are some small measure is to say to the public that we are doing a great job in Queensland, but we're not through this yet and I hope that

these measures will give some relief to families. But there are three key conditions. That is, with his above once I have mentioned, we have to keep up hygiene and our social distancing. This social distancing is absolutely paramount. We have to stay within 50 kilometres of our homes. We have been saying to people stay in your suburbs, stay in your village, but what we do not want to see is large-scale movements of people, like Cairns to Townsville, people from the Sunshine Coast going to the Gold Coast. So if you live in that Brisbane region, you should stay 50 kilometres from within your home and likewise it is not to go to a national park outside your area. But if you are living on the Gold Coast, you could go to a national park within 50 kilometres.

I know these sound like strict rules, everyone, but we are in different times and I'm trying to be flexible and listen to what the public is saying. And on the advice of the Health Officer, we have taken these measures. And once again, the other, the other condition is that outings are limited to members of your own household. So what we do not want is groups of friends meeting up with other friends at this stage. That is not what we are saying. But, if you are living in a family household, you can go for a picnic at your local park or you could drive from Brisbane to South Bank and go for a walk. So I think this is a good example of listening but also to...it's basically we are saying the Queensland public have done a tremendous job. I hope Queenslanders are happy with the decisions we've taken there. But I'll hand over to Steven Miles to say a few words and then our Chief Officer and then I'm happy to take some questions. Thanks Steven.

MINISTER MILES:

Thank you, and the Premier is right, Queenslanders have done something pretty incredible. When we were talking to you during March about the COVID-19 pandemic, taking the world and arriving here in numbers in Queensland, there was no way I thought that by the end of April we could be considering easing some of these strictest restrictions but that's where we find ourselves because Queenslanders have done such a fantastic job. But this is a very minor easing and we will need to see how it goes. In terms of the data for today, generally very good news. Three positive cases as well as one additional case now included in our total numbers from earlier, bringing the total to 1030.

What is fantastic is we are able today to update the data for the number of people who've recovered from COVID-19. There are now 926 Queenslanders who have had the virus and recovered, meaning, we have just 98 active cases here in the state right now. Of those, 18 are in hospital, just six are in ICU, five of them are ventilated and as the Premier said, we continue to test at very high rates, allowing us to be very confident that we are picking up our cases.

Until now, there has been a very limited range of reasons people have been able to leave their homes, and those initiatives have worked so that we can now allow Queenslanders to leave their homes for another reason, for recreation, meaning you can go for a picnic, go for a drive, go out with your family or, if you are by yourself, to meet one other person, provided, it is within 50 kilometres of your home.

All of this will be in place for next weekend, the Labour Day weekend. I, for one am looking forward to taking my kids to the beach at Redcliffe and having fish and chips on the beach.

That is something we have really missed doing that recently and cannot wait to do next week, but the other restrictions remain in place and it is incredibly important that we follow the other restrictions so that we know whether we can keep this easing in place or, indeed, go further.

And so, social distancing remains important, especially for non-essential shops that are now seeing more customers now than they have been. It is crucial they keep those social distancing measures in place and that we restrict contact to outside of our household group, if we reduce the number of people who we have contact with, we dramatically reduce the chances you have of getting and spreading COVID-19.

DR YOUNG:

Today, Queenslanders can leave their homes for essential reasons or for exercise. As of next Saturday morning, they will be able to leave their homes for recreation, which is excellent news. We can do this in Queensland because of the way that Queenslanders have been adhering to the most draconian restrictions that have been put in place. They have been adhering to them so well, that we have only seen three new cases in the last 24-hour 's, two new cases prior to that so those restrictions have been working.

Now I firmly believe that if Queenslanders continue to adhere to the new restrictions when they come in place and followed them, we will not see additional cases. Because what we are saying, as of next Saturday morning, that Queenslanders still in their own household group, so without going and mixing without additional people, just within their household group, they can now go out into the community and as long as they maintain social distancing from other people from different households, there should be no increase in cases.

They can, of course, if they go out by themselves, meet up with one other person. That has already been the case. So, as of next weekend, people can go for a drive. They can go for a picnic. They can purchase some takeaway and sit down and enjoy it outside. But it is really important they do that within their household group or with one other person if they are going up by themselves. And it is important they continue to do it within their own community. That is now being defined to give everyone a better guide. So within 50 kilometres of where their principal place of residence is. So, staying within their own community because we know that we still do have more cases down in the south-east corner and we do not want those to spread further across the state. So although we only had two cases yesterday, one of them was locally acquired in north Brisbane, and we're still trying to find the source of that case. So it is really that people continue to minimise the number of new people they come into contact with.

So when you go shopping, make sure you maintain that 1.5 metre distance. I know when I've been out and I've seen how innovative shops have been to sort that out. A lot of places I go you can see a sign on the door saying "we can only have 10 people in our shop at a point in time". So lookout for that information and adhere to it because everyone here in Queensland, everyone, individuals, organisations, businesses are doing their best and we'll be able to if this works, and I'm sure it will work. I really think Queenslanders have done a magnificent job in following instructions. If this works, in two weeks time we'll be able to look at what

else we can do. And we can gradually try to get back to normal as much as we possible can. Thank you.

STATE DISASTER COORDINATOR:

Thanks Premier. Good morning everyone. Look I really will echo just to start with the words you have already heard from the Premier, the Minister and the Chief Health Officer. We're able to lift these restrictions to this degree because of the great work done by everyone in our community, but we don't want to see that work come undone. It's really important that everyone understands what those changes are and works within them because police will still be out there making sure you keep your social distance, you follow the Chief Health Officer's directions and that you comply with them. We still to get that compliance.

I'm happy to say yesterday we saw Anzac Day celebrated and not one infringement notice has been issued in relation to the Anzac Day celebrations. However, we're still having to issue infringement notices for people having parties in their houses, hooning offences and for people inappropriately not observing the social distancing rules. So we will continue to enforce those rules as we go forward.

Today it is really important you understand what 50 kilometres means for you if you are going to go out and take advantage of this. Make sure before you go out – and this is upon you – that you are within that 50 kilometre radius because we will be checking.

I just want to say the compliance regime has been going well with police and the Attorney-General's taskforce and we will continue to do that. People need to understand if they are in quarantine that are bound by those quarantine regulation or requirements. And overall we are seeing a very, very strong compliance with that, but we really do want to get to 100 per cent compliance with those sorts of people and we will continue to police in that space.

I'll just finish off by saying great work from Health and the Queensland Police Service working with health, what a great partnership that has been and we've been able to get this compliance regime and social distancing regime in. But most importantly thank you o the community for listening and continuing to listen to what the messages are. Thank you.

PREMIER:

Happy to take some questions and sorry, I should add too that you're also allowed to go out on your boat with your family group, or one other person. You can go on a jet ski and you can ride a motorbike as well. I just wanted to add those in.

REPORTER:

What about playgrounds? Can they open up again?

PREMIER:

Not at this stage, but that's something we will look at in the future.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

PREMIER:

Well Jess, I think it's really important here that we evaluate this in two weeks' time. And like the Chief Health Officer said, it depends on how well Queenslanders abide by that social distancing. We don't want to see any spikes, but we're at the stage where we have seen consistently low numbers, and now is the time to ease some of those stay at home restrictions for recreational purposes. And I think too for people's mental health as well, this is going to be greatly appreciated, and don't think I don't underestimate how people are really doing it tough at home during these times.

REPORTER:

What about opening up borders? The Australian Industry Group is calling for the borders to be opened up.

PREMIER:

Not at this stage Michael. No.

REPORTER:

What would you say to business people, tourism operators that operate on those borders and explain to them the difference between a couple of kilometres between over the people and the...

PREMIER:

Because there are still large community transmissions in New South Wales and Victoria, I'm happy to get the Chief Health Officer to explain on that. And probably one of the two key measures we have taken was to close our international borders and close our state borders because of that community transmission, and we have seen people from Victoria and people from Sydney come into Queensland and testing positive. So not at this time. I'm not saying this is not going to happen in the future but unfortunately we can't do it at this stage.

REPORTER:

Are you going to look at it sometime soon?

PREMIER:

Down the track. But not in the immediate future.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

PREMIER:

It's all about Queenslanders, this is the great work that Queenslanders have been doing. But we must keep up the social distancing. We have to make sure we keep out distance from each other and the last thing we want to see is mass gatherings, so people have to do the right thing. And I think Queenslanders will. But I'm putting my trust in them to step up and do the

right thing because they have been abiding by everything that has happening to date, and I'm really proud of the work Queenslanders have been doing.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] do you have a number on if the cases were to increase to a certain number you might have to consider winding that back or is it a wait and see?

PREMIER:

Lets wait and see after the two weeks, but of course, National Cabinet is looking at a whole range of measures for the future. We know that eventually we will have to get our economy up and running so we're looking at the testing regime, the tracing regime, the Prime Minister is going to be briefing the National Cabinet on the app, we would have to try and encourage people as much as possible to join up to that. So there's a whole lot of other conditions we need to look at before we bring large scale businesses back. Look these are small steps but every small step here is amazing because of the work of Queenslanders. And I think Dr Young has some figures about where she thought we may have been if we had not taken those measures as we did.

REPORTER:

Do you know what the next stages might look like in terms of returning to some normality?

PREMIER:

Well we said that by the 15th of May we would be reviewing schools, so that work is happening. We are very conscious that we need to have some COVID-19 ready plans in schools for teachers and for parent drop offs. The last thing we want to see is a return to school where the teachers are congregating together. They need to have social distancing practices put in place. And also too we need to make sure that at drop off and pick up that we don't have parents congregating in groups that could actually see community transmission. There is a lot of work that has to be done across the next two weeks to see what we do come that 15th May.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] what's your response to independent schools call to open up schools for Year 11 and 12?

PREMIER:

We're looking at that as well, that's one of the key things we're absolutely looking at for that 15th of May, but also too it's those early years. Look, I don't want to pre-judge, but we are doing a lot of work behind the scenes, we've been talking to everybody to get this right. But like I said today, one small step, a step I didn't see we would be making at this stage. And if everyone goes well with this step it will lead to other steps as well.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] would you look at bring for example...



PREMIER:

We're looking at all options Jess. I want to see more contact. My key role here is to see more face-to-face-contact between teachers and students. I mean, that's essential.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] commentary coming out of Canberra...Peter Dutton again attacked you this morning saying you're beholden to the Education Union...

PREMIER:

That's ridiculous. Peter Dutton is not getting the health advice that I'm getting. So I will listen to the experts and I will respond to the experts, and I will then convey that expert advice with the stake holders. There's a lot of stake holders here. You've got teachers, parents, there's the students, there's the education system, the private school system as well. We are going to be talking to everyone. And we've got until the 15th of May to make that decision. I know that the Education Minister and I are going to be very busy in the coming weeks.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] teacher aides supervising children because there's not enough teachers in some schools apparently. Do you think that's an appropriate solution?

PREMIER:

I'm leaving that to the principals to work out at this stage. I've made it very clear that the schools are open, that the teachers should be at the schools, and we need to make sure our students at home are getting the online schooling. But also too we need to be preparing now for more student teacher contact within the coming weeks and months. It depends once again on the numbers. So I hate to say it's a numbers game here, but there are different case numbers in Western Australia and South Australia compared to Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. So we'll be looking at all of that and acting responsibly.

REPORTER:

Will it still take until May 15th before that is reviewed or are you...

PREMIER:

It's starting now. Everything is happening at the moment and we'll be making the decision, and we'll be letting everyone know, on May 15.

REPORTER:

How do you police shopping centres like Chermside? Big places that have seemingly allowed to start re-opening. How do you stop people flooding back there?



PREMIER:

People are pretty smart so the public know there should not be mass gatherings. I'll give you an example, if you are going to go to a national park and the car park is full don't go in. If you see a lot of people at a particular picnic venue, don't go there, find somewhere else. You've got to keep your distance. This is not going to work if we don't keep our distance. Also too, Dr Young has said time and time again...make your list, go in and get what you need and leave. It's not about hanging around for two or three hours, it's about going in, get what you need and leaving. As Dr Young was saying too a lot of retail outlets now have got the social distancing in place. There's a lot of onus here on the business to make sure they are adhering to the standards we are asking them to take.

REPORTER:

Premier, the Health Minister himself has said he is looking forward to a family picnic at the beach, a lot of people are probably going to have that in mind. What advice do you give to any family who does want to go to the beach next weekend for fish and chips or something like that?

PREMIER:

So you need to go within your region, so what we're saying, if you live on the Gold Coast, of course you can go to a beach of a national park on the Gold Coast. If you are within Brisbane, you might want to go into the botanical gardens or South Bank, or Roma Street Parklands or up to Mt Coot-tha for a drive. I mean, you've got to roughly stay in that area, so we're really asking Queenslanders to do the right thing here. We're not at that stage where we can see mass movements of people from region to region. So we're asking people to use their common sense and be practical.

REPORTER:

The NRL are now saying there's a dossier that has come to you, 40 pages, biosecurity plan [inaudible]...could you still see anyway an NRL game could be played in Queensland?

PREMIER:

I might say this...a number of sporting codes are putting in their detailed plans. I have received two, they have been forwarded to the Chief Health Officer to get their advice, and I'll be waiting for her advice in relation to that. People are innovative and I'm quite sure that everyone would like to see sport resume but it just needs to ensure it is compliant with the health advice and National Cabinet will be considering key principles next Friday. There is a willingness for everyone to make something happen, but it has to be safe.

REPORTER:

Is that NRL and AFL or...

PREMIER:

I'll just say two.

REPORTER:

Two sports?

PREMIER:

Two sports.

REPORTER:

Can you give us an idea of what they are proposing?

PREMIER:

No because they're confidential. They're actually sent to government in confidence so I'm going to respect that. Others might not, but I will.

REPORTER:

If you're reviewing restrictions in two weeks what would be next on the list?

PREMIER:

As I said we're looking at schools for the 15th May and we're always looking at other measures. We'll be guided by advice we're seeking from the National Cabinet as well. But I think we've shown Queenslanders have done a great job, and one small step here, but a bit more freedom for people is really going to lift their spirits up I think and allow them to get out of the house a little bit more than they have been. Thank you Queenslanders. I might get Dr Young to say a few words.

REPORTER:

Doctor Young does the health advice stay the same for grandparents visiting their grandchildren?

DR YOUNG:

Yes it does. So people who are vulnerable, those people who are 65 years of age or older with one or more chronic disease or people 70 years of age or older and aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who are 50 years of age or older with one or more chronic diseases should be careful. So if they're leaving their home it might be an idea to go out for a drive, to go somewhere where there aren't a lot of people so they can still try to minimise their contact with other people because we know that they're the people unfortunately who are most at risk of dying from this infection.

REPORTER:

Doctor Young can I ask you about Virgin flight 341 and effort to track down some of the passengers from that flight? What has been done there?

DR YOUNG:

We're still trying to track down two people and there's a lot of work going on today to find those two particular people. Everyone else we've been able to track down who we needed to.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] can you tell us [inaudible] how you will be making decisions around that?

DR YOUNG:

Really we will be looking at what the health consequences are. Both for the players but also for the general community.

REPORTER:

Over the Anzac Day 24 hours we did see a bit of a spike in the number of people who were directed to quarantine across the border. What was the reason for that?

STATE DISASTER COORDINATOR:

That has been a data capture issue with our reporting and how we've been capturing that data and how it has been entered into the system. We've had a look at that and satisfied that it's very consistent with what has been happening. So just a data entry issue.

REPORTER:

So is it incorrect...

STATE DISASTER COORDINATOR:

It's not incorrect, just a lag in some of the data being put into the system.

REPORTER:

Can you tell us how people will be [inaudible]...

STATE DISASTER COORDINATOR:

I would just suggest to everyone if they're going to go out and about to verify where you live. You can simply get onto the Australia Post website or app and put in your post code and see what that 50 kilometre radius is. So you can have an idea of what that looks like before you go out. So people just need to be aware of where they've come from, where they've gone to. And our officers, if they have a reason to speak to them will be checking to make sure they're within that 50 kilometres.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

STATE DISASTER COORDINATOR:

You'll see officers as you've out...we're not going to change our posture or visibility, we'll be out and about as we've been doing all long, just with an adjustment of what we're looking forward.

REPORTER:

There's a story doing then rounds about a pilot who decided to fly...you mentioned there was no infringement on Anzac Day...is there any idea that some of those people...

STATE DISASTER COORDINATOR:

We're still looking into this one. My understanding was no exemption was given so we'll have a look at that and see what the issues are.

REPORTER:

One other question on tourism campaign, there's a \$56 billion pool for people who would normally go overseas that down the track we might try to get a hold of here in Queensland. There's talks of a new tourism campaign, how advanced are those at the moment?

PREMIER:

Yeah look I know that the Federal Government has allocated some money and Kate Jones is working on a domestic type campaign as well, but there's a lot of work that has to happen with the tourism industry to be COVID-19 safe. And a lot of that revolves around testing, tracing and that app. We're still waiting to see the details on the app that the Prime Minister is going to show the National Cabinet, but there's a lot of things that need to be put into place to be safe. And we know how important the tourism industry is for Queensland so it's front and centre of our work.

REPORTER:

Premier, Clive Palmer has apparently re-registered his party about a week ago and there maybe a chance his party is going to contest the October election, what's your response to that?

PREMIER:

Good luck to him.

REPORTER:

Any fears of his party in the regions?

PREMIER:

Not really? Thanks Michael.

REPORTER:

Thank you Premier.

[ENDS]

Engagement: Press conference

Speaker/s: Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk, Health Minister Steven Miles, Chief Health Officer Dr Jeannette Young, State Disaster Coordinator Steve Gollschewski

Date: 27 April 2020

Duration: 25 minutes

E&OE

PREMIER:

So last night we had three new cases, taking our total to 1033, and we've had over 99,527 tests that have been conducted. And in further good news, 926 people have already recovered. So that is excellent news and that's the sort of statistics we want to be seeing into the future which has allowed us to make that decision yesterday to be able to lift some of the stay-at-home restriction for the weekend. It's going to be very important that people practise their social distancing. So once again I ask Queenslanders in the lead-up to next weekend, think about the guiding principles and make sure that you are abiding by those social distancing rules. Well, today, I want to talk about a couple of things, first of all, I will talk about a new directive that's been issued and then I want to talk a bit about the app that has been launched. Today we are looking at clamping down people who attack front-line workers and anyone who deliberately coughs, sneezes or spits on front-line workers, including health workers and police, but also people like shop assistants that are in that front-line, dealing with the community, could be fined up to \$1300 dollars on-the-spot, or if you it goes to court, more than \$13,000 dollars. Some other states have done this as well, and I think it's absolutely the right thing to do. So you will hear very shortly from Dr Young and Steven Miles. We have got our State Disaster Coordinator to talk about the impacts on police, and also we've got Chris Gazenbeek from the shop and distribution union to talk about the impact on retail assistants, and I think that's really important because everyone is out there, trying to do the right thing, doing their work, but we don't want people harassing them and causing them distress in the workplace. In relation to the app, can I say that I fully support the COVID-Safe app. My sister got to it before me, she's already texted the whole family to sign up. And I have signed up this morning. It takes about two minutes but it's really important if we want to see our life return to some form of normality, especially when down the track, when we look at opening up different areas. I think it's really important for not only your safety, but your friends' safety and your family's safety. So to know who you have been in contact with that could be found to be positive. I think it's really important. It's being done in Singapore. And it is really important that we all, as much possible... it's voluntary, but I would urge Queenslanders to sign up to that app. So, look, I will hand over to Steven to say a few words, Dr Young and then happy to take questions. Thanks Steven.

MINISTER MILES:

Thanks so much, Premier. That result overnight of just three additional cases is a continuation of those very good results we've been seeing. But we need to remember that our results today are the result of our efforts two weeks ago and that's why we need to see how these easing of restrictions at the weekend go for two weeks before we will get a sense of whether people are complying with the rules, whether that increased mobility leads to an increased infection rate. Of our 101 active cases, just 101 active cases in Queensland, we're now down to 15 in hospital, six of them in intensive care, all of them being ventilated. What we're doing today with this new public health emergency order is to support our front-line workers. Everyone who is working right now is working because they're considered essential. They should never feel threatened at work. They should certainly never be threatened with being deliberately infected with COVID-19. During a pandemic, a cough can be used as a weapon. A sneeze can be as dangerous as a knife. Spitting is of course always disgusting. And this new order will allow us to protect all of our essential workers from deliberate coughing, sneezing, and spitting. We have had cases of hospital staff, nurses, being threatened with being coughed upon in fever clinics, we've had paramedics experience the same kind of threatening behaviour, and I was disturbed to hear last week from Chris, who you will hear from in a moment, about how our retail workers, our shop assistants, had been threatened just doing their jobs. We are all reliant right now on those retail workers to supply us with the goods that we need. And I want to send a very strong signal to the community that those workers should never feel threatened and I want to send a signal to those workers that we support them, that we care about them, we care about their health and safety and that's why we're making this new order today.

DR YOUNG:

We had three new cases overnight, which is an excellent outcome, and Queenslanders across the state are following the advice very clearly. The announcement today is for that very small number of people who deliberately think that they can threaten someone else by threatening them that they may infect them by coughing, sneezing or spitting on them. We of course all know that if you're unwell you should be remaining at home, so you shouldn't be out there coughing on people. If you are out and about and you feel you do have to cough then we know that you must cover your cough at all times, or cough into your elbow so that you don't infect anyone. So this is about those people who are deliberately using it as a weapon. And it's so important that we do protect our workers who do still need to be out there interacting with the public, most of whom of course are doing the right thing and are staying at home if they're unwell. So I myself downloaded the COVID-Safe app this morning, and I strongly encourage everyone to do so. There's two things – one, you'll protect your community by doing it but also you'll protect yourself. Because then you'll get told if you've been within 1.5 metres of anyone who is COVID-19 positive for more than 15 minutes. So you'll know and then you'll be able to monitor your own health much more closely, and be aware that you could be incubating the infection and so you'll be more aware and more alert to the people around you. So if you live in a house with vulnerable, for instance. So it'll help public health authorities like myself to manage to find more people who've been in contact so that we can manage all those cases, and once we've got it in place and it's working and we can see that it's assisting us, we'll then be able to look at whether we can put in place further reductions in those restrictions. So we know Saturday, this coming weekend, that there's been a relaxation of some of those restrictions. It's really important that people adhere to that new

restriction, that they don't go beyond it, that they don't think this is a chance to go even further. So it's very important that people still stay in their household groups or with one other person when they go out and about. It should be a lovely weekend so I hope everyone can enjoy it. Thank you.

STEVE GOLLSCHESKI:

Just to add what's already been said, the offence in relation to coughing and spitting, everyone should be assured that there are police officers who will take this very seriously and investigate this very thoroughly. This is not an acceptable behaviour. That kind of deliberate act can cause grave distress to the person it's directed at. That includes frontline police officers as well as other workers. With respect to the new changes that are coming in on Friday night, really reinforce for everyone that outside the 50kms radius, the same exemptions still apply so you need to have the exempt category to be able to go out of the 50kms. Within that 50kms, people need to be very careful that they abide by the social distancing regulations and restrictions. We will be enforcing that and can I say to the people in Brisbane, that will not include Stradbroke or Moreton Islands. They remain having separate restrictions to them. You cannot apply the 50kms to Stradbroke or Moreton, more in fact for our indigenous communities or Fraser Island for any persons that live in those areas. There will be more messaging as the week goes on. It's very simple, know where your place of residence is and make sure you're within your 50kms and then you can have more freedom of movement but abide by the social distancing. Can I finish off by saying that over the weekend, we did see 114 penalty infringement notices. What's disappointing about these is we're seeing too many people having parties, either street parties or inhouse parties against the restrictions. That's really not acceptable. Now is not the time to undo all the good work that has been done and similarly, we are seeing people commit offences such as hooning and then we, the police having to take action in relation to the social distancing that they are not abiding by, so the message is out there to everyone. We will continue to police this very strongly, we will be out and about, you will see police in the community trying to make sure that everyone abides with the chief health officer's directions.

CHRIS GAZENBEEK:

Retail workers, fast food workers and pharmacy workers have been copping the brunt. There's been an increase in upsurge in customer abuse and violence during the Covid-19 pandemic. In one sense it's disturbing that these laws need to be implemented but unfortunately, they are necessary. There has been an increase in the number of spitting and coughing incidents throughout the country but quite a few in Queensland in recent weeks. Our members and all workers deserve to go to work with dignity and respect and be treated in a safe way so we applaud the Palaszczuk government, the chief health officer and Health Minister Miles for taking such a tough stance on these measures. It's important that we protect our retail workers, fast food workers. They are doing essential work during this crisis to keep people fed. They are doing an amazing job and if you are there in the shops at the moment or over the coming weeks, please take the time to say thank you because they are doing it very tough at the moment. They are on the frontline, they are working extremely hard placing themselves at risk and these laws will go a long way to ensure that we protect their wellbeing and their safety and the safety of their families. So I once again thank the

Premier, chief health officer and Minister Miles for taking such a strong stance. These fines will send a clear message to the community that one point we need to say is these are your sons, your daughters, your parents. We need to work together to make sure we maintain a healthy and safe society. Thank you.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] those sort, and they are attacks on retail workers. I mean, what is leading up to it? Why are people doing it?

CHRIS GAZENBEEK:

I think it is because... well, initially several weeks ago it was as a result of the panic buying, so there was quite an increased pressure point. But, obviously measures were taken, and I think there was broad support to allow curfew to change, for there to be further deliveries to the stores to release that pressure valve. But I think it is the increased pressure, the reality is that people are at home, they've got kids at home and there's a lot of extra pressures that are placed on people; financial pressures, people losing their jobs, there's financial pressures placed on them, so I think when people go in the shopping centres, the supermarkets in particular, the pharmacies are extremely busy, it can be the smallest little trigger that sets someone off, which leads to some form of action which could be verbal abuse. Unfortunately we've seen some physical assaults and altercations, which I am sure you've all seen in the media and social media. But we are now starting to see an increase of people coughing and sneezing and spitting. There was one example recently where an employee was simply doing their job and trying to organise a refund in accordance with company policy, the member of the public was obviously frustrated, wasn't happy with the way it was presented and proceeded to cough and sneeze as a retaliatory action. That's just appalling behaviour, and these steps and measures will ensure that the public is well aware of it and people will be fined and in the extreme sense, it will be significant fines and potential criminal charges laid.

PREMIER:

So just to clarify that the workers include health workers, health department officials, police, fire, ambulance officers, retail workers, food delivery workers, transport workers, ferry crews, bus, train, taxi and rideshare drivers, council workers, electricity, gas and water meter readers, airport workers, teachers and school staff.

REPORTER:

How do you describe that sort of behaviour?

PREMIER:

Disgusting. It is absolutely disgusting to think that some people are putting other people's lives at risk. And in this environment, can I please ask people to be respectful? Respect is the key here.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] members of the public, like if someone coughs on another person?

PREMIER:

That is something that we may have to look at, but once again I am asking everyone to be responsible. But what we are seeing is that people are taking their frustrations out on some of our essential workers, and it is not on.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] on the spot fine, why did we go that high?

PREMIER:

Well we are making ours consistent, Patrick, so great to see you back too, about \$1300 on the spot fine, but if it is taken to court, it is probably some of the toughest, up to \$13,000.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] announcement around schools yesterday, can you please explain to people who are a bit confused about why they are able to go for a picnic but not be allowed to school?

PREMIER:

Because they are in the same household, so it is the same household that can go for a picnic, or if you are single you can go plus one. Let me make it very clear, I don't think there is a list of countries that have absolutely opened up their schools. We are still in a world pandemic. So, if someone can provide me with a full list, I am happy to look at that list, but it is very unusual in these times to have schools fully open. So what we've seen is health advice in relation to the classroom, I said that we'll make our decision on May 15, I can't be any clearer on that. There will be a lot of discussions happening, but there is concern about teachers in their staffrooms, and also the school before pickup and after pickup. We are not going to rush this, we are going to get this right and I will not put the lives of our teachers, our principals, our school community and our parents, and our children, at risk. So, we will take a measured response to this. But I ask you all, as good media representatives, go and have a look, search the world, come back to me and tell me the large volumes – not – of countries that are doing this. Let's be very realistic here, we are not in normal times, we are in very different circumstances at the moment.

REPORTER:

Premier, do you have an update on plans to move around 300 homeless people into student accommodation in Toowong?

PREMIER:

No, but Mick de Brenni can update you on that later.

REPORTER:

Has the NRL given you a plan yet?

PREMIER:

Yes, I can confirm that a plan was submitted late on Friday evening, it has been forwarded to Dr Young, I am quite sure Dr Young will go through that plan and then we'll have conversations with the NRL and any other sporting code that has submitted a plan.



REPORTER:

Premier [inaudible] once a line of sight, in terms of recovery, can the government do this yet?

PREMIER:

We are absolutely working on recovery. It is critical, and one of those paths to recovery is this app. So can I just say it again, a path to recovery is people joining up to this app because it is for your safety and the safety of others. The other thing I'll be doing this week too, is myself, the Health Minister and Dr Young will be writing to retail outlets to make sure that their premises are COVID-safe. Now, what this means is many people can be accredited as COVID-safe, but also too, with the four square metre rule, they can actually put at the front of their shops how many people are allowed into those shops, and I would ask the public to make sure that they do not go into crowded spaces. It is for your safety to adhere to the social distancing, social distancing rules are a key to our recovery.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] you're just reminding them?

PREMIER:

We are just reminding them, so we are going to write to them and remind them. I think what we saw after the Anzac Day public holiday, there was a big rush yesterday for everyone to return to the shops, so our rules kick in next week for non-essential, but retailers, I think, have an opportunity now to make sure that they are making sure how many people are allowed into their shop at any one time. I think that is the responsible thing to do.

REPORTER:

Unemployment levels in some regional areas are through the roof, I think Wide Bay has doubled, is there anything in particular to help regional areas?

PREMIER:

We will be looking at regional areas. Like Dr Young has said, you need those two 14 days of that incubation period, our signs in Queensland are very positive and very promising and of course now we need... we have a group working on overlaying that health advice with economic advice as to what are the next stages of restrictions that can be lifted.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] packages or promotions for tourist areas to get them up and running once restrictions are lifted?

PREMIER:

Tourism... I think that's a bit down the track, Lane, because there's a whole complexity there about accommodation and what is COVID-safe. We have to work through all of that, about how you would accredit accommodation place as being safe, but also too, at the moment it is stay at home and you can go out for these extra purposes within your region. So, we are not at that stage yet, when we get to that stage I will come and tell everybody.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] crying out to open the pub, but in the more remote areas?

PREMIER:

Well, we need to be very cautious here. What I would see is if, for example, we opened, if we opened up those areas, you would see a large influx of other areas moving to those areas. So, we need to do it in a very responsible manner. Queensland, we're very lucky, we've got a diversified state and decentralised, so we will of course be looking at all of those regional areas as we plan for our recovery into the future. Our priority at the moment was to lift some of those stay at home restrictions, the next state will be looking at May 15th about schools, and then, as Dr Young has said, we need to put in place these measures, you need to examine them over a two-week period to see how we are faring – after that two-week period to make sure we are still flattening that curve. Let me make it very clear – if we take these measures and we see spikes we will not hesitate to clamp down again, so each step is a small step but it is a big step in terms of dealing with the coronavirus outbreak.

REPORTER:

You were mentioning before about parties and street parties, so if you and a few of your neighbours hop on the driveway and have a few beers, is that not allowed?

STEVE GOLLSCHESKI:

So people staying in their properties, provided they abide by the rules of how many can be... so people in that house obviously can gather together and then there's restrictions of two coming in. If they're within their property, that's okay, but if you bring lots of people into your house, even if it's the same neighbourhood, that's not okay. And similarly, if you decide to have a party on the street, well you're in public then so you're breaching the directions.

REPORTER:

...[inaudible] having a look at some of the flyovers that might have breached the rules, have you got an update on that?

STEVE GOLLSCHESKI:

No, that's still being looked at, and there's legal issues around there in terms of the interpretation of whether they're exempt or not. But we'll have a look at it.

REPORTER:

Dr Young, after you expanded the testing criteria on Friday, are we actually seeing more testing done each day?

DR YOUNG:

No, we haven't, and I believe that's because we're not seeing respiratory disease in Queensland. Last week we had nine cases of flu. We'd normally expect to see 800-900 cases of flu in a week at this time of the year, so we're just not seeing respiratory disease so people aren't sick, and that's why I believe they're not coming forward. But anybody who's got any symptoms suggestive of respiratory disease, so cough, shortness of breath, they've got a

fever, sore throat, they should go and get tested. So go and see their own GP after they've given them a call or go to the local fever clinic or the hospital. That's really important anywhere in the state. But yes, we're not seeing large numbers. But we're not seeing large numbers of positives, so we're working through it and seeing that we're testing well over 1000 people to get a couple of positives.

REPORTER:

...[inaudible] do you have an update on how many of those tests have been done and how many turned up as positives?

DR YOUNG:

So far we've had an additional positive up in Cairns. So we had three, then a fourth. So there are four that we've seen up there. We don't think they're all related to that laboratory cluster though, we think some of them might have been from earlier disease. So we're just working through that, and we've seen one other person positive through that serology testing.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

DR YOUNG:

No, no. It was a relative of someone.

REPORTER:

How many serology tests have you done?

DR YOUNG:

I don't have that full figure, no. Thank you.

[ENDS]

Engagement: Press conference

Speaker/s: Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk, Minister Steven Miles,
Dr Jeanette Young, Dr Dilip Dhupelia, Beth Mohle

Date: 28 April 2020

Duration: 17 minutes

E&OE

PREMIER:

Okay, so good morning everyone. In some further good news for Queensland, zero cases overnight. We love to hear that news and thank you Queensland for everything you are doing. We really appreciate the hard work. The number of tests is well over 99,000, people recovered 934, only 93 active cases, so we've got below that 100, and we've only had 13 cases in the last week, so Queenslanders, congratulations we're definitely flattening that curve. Well today, the Health Minister and I will be having our flu shots and hopefully members of the press gallery will also enjoy their flu shots as well. And we want to urge Queenslanders to get their flu shots. It's really important coming up to the winter season that as many people as possible get that. Dr Young will explain to you in more detail how you can go about getting that. Today we're also joined by Dr Dilip and Beth – Beth from the Nurses Union and of course Dr Dilip from the AMA – to talk to you about how important it is for Queenslanders to sign up to the Federal Government's app. You want to hear it from the medical experts, it's really important you do that. If we want to get life back to some form of normality it's really important for Queenslanders to sign up. And I've signed up, my family's signed up, I know Steven Miles has signed up, Dr Young has signed up, so please everyone let's do this together and sign up for the app. So I might hand over to Steven to say a few words, then Dr Young, and then of course Beth and Dr Dilip. Thanks, Steven?

MINISTER MILES:

Well this is another zero day for Queensland, and my favourite days are zero days. No new cases of COVID-19. I can also confirm that all of the cases that we reported yesterday were internationally acquired off a cruise ship. We've also now ticked over 100,000 tests, 101,767 which includes the 1923 tests we did in the last 24 hour reporting period. As of this morning, we have 14, just 14 Queenslanders in hospital with COVID-19, six of them in intensive care. Over the last 90 days since we had our first case of COVID-19, we've asked Queenslanders to do a lot. We've asked them to stay home, we've asked them to stay distant, we've asked them to do a lot of things. Today we're asking them to do two more things, but they are simple and they are safe. First of all we're asking them to get their flu vaccination. Right now, we are at record lows in terms of influenza circulation and we want to keep it that way, and the best way to keep it that way is to get as many Queenslanders as possible to have their flu vaccination, and the Premier and I will be getting ours this morning. We're also asking Queenslanders to download the Federal Government's COVID-19 safe app. This app, if enough people download it will help us continue to control COVID-19 without the harsh

restrictions that we have needed so far. And so, we're urging all Queenslanders to download the app today and make a plan to go and get their flu shot today.

DR YOUNG:

No new cases of COVID-19 in Queensland overnight, which is excellent news. Now the other thing we need to do, as well as not have new cases or to have very, very small numbers of cases, is we need to when we get those cases be able to very, very rapidly contact trace the people who've been in contact with that case, and that's where the app will help us enormously. So I do encourage every single Queenslander to download the app. I've done it, and you've heard that the Minister and the Premier have, and we're about to hear from the leaders in the medical profession and the nursing profession. So this is really important. The other thing that's important to do today is to get vaccinated against the flu. We see the peak of the flu season in Queensland in June through to September, so now is the time to get vaccinated so that you'll have immunity for when increased cases of flu may start to circulate. So far we've seen very, very low numbers of flu because everyone is socially distancing, so you'd expect that. But we do have a vaccine so we should avail ourselves of it. No one wants to get a disease that they don't need to get, and also we know that the vulnerable are at risk of severe consequences. So if you're in one of those groups, you're 65 years of age, you're pregnant, you're 5 years of age or under, you're Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or you have chronic disease of any age, it's really, really important that you get vaccinated, go and see your GP or your usual vaccine provider. But for all Queenslanders you can go and get vaccinated with your GP or you can go to a community pharmacy, whatever is easiest, or you may have programs at your workplace. That's important as well. Thank you.

DR DILIP:

It's important as President of AMA Queensland that I remind everybody that general practice is an essential requirement, is an essential business and people should feel free to go into general practice to get their flu vaccinations and for all the preventative care they have withheld as a result of the staying at home message. It is vital that you don't put off any of your symptoms anymore, to go to the general practice, to get your tests, to get your diagnostic tests done, and to not put off those vague symptoms that you have because it could be to your detriment. We have plenty of flu vaccinations available, we have made General Practice safe for you to receive your flu vaccinations. We have innovative ways of giving you the flu vaccines through flu clinics, through drive-through flu clinics and car park flu clinics, so please check with your general practitioner, call ahead, book your vaccination and book your preventative care that you might have been putting off.

BETH MOHLE:

Today I'd like to add my voice to everybody else who said what can we do to help us win the fight against COVID-19. And there's two things that you can do – you can download the COVIDSafe app that the Federal Government launched on Sunday night. That's something that I've already done, it's on my phone and it's something that you can do to help not only keep yourself safe, but keep the whole community safe. The other thing that you can do is have your flu shot. And I've already had mine in early April. It's really important that we do

all within our power to work together to fight COVID-19 because I know together we will win this battle.

PREMIER:

Any questions for anyone?

REPORTER:

Just a question on nursing homes. Can you just clarify – earlier in the week the Prime Minister encouraged people to visit anyone in those homes, but a lot are still in lockdown. Can you just clarify what your advice is?

PREMIER:

Yes, it was discussed at National Cabinet and our advice is nursing homes should be open. If nursing homes have a valid reason not to be open, then I think that the Prime Minister was looking at that they would need to have an exemption from the Federal Government. So we've got National Cabinet again on Friday and I'm quite sure we will get a further update.

REPORTER:

What would be a valid reason to be closed?

PREMIER:

Well that's...the Federal Government looks after the Federal Government nursing homes, so you'd have to put those questions to them. But look, on the weekend I went and visited my grandmother. It's very simple. You go in there, they take your temperature. You have to be socially distance and she was extremely bright and cheerful that she had family coming and seeing her. She's 95. I think it's really important that people are allowed to see their relatives, their loved ones.

REPORTER:

Premier, a few academics are warning that children will...students will fall behind the longer they stay out of the classroom, suggesting that may might be too late. Does that sway you at all? Do you accept what they're saying?

PREMIER:

There's also...well Lane, a couple of things. So, first thing – we've seen zero cases today. If we keep seeing those really low cases there's more of a case, more of a proposition that more can be open. More contact with students and teachers come that decision we have to make on the 15th of May. So, the next two weeks is really critical. And like I said yesterday, everything is on the table. I also said yesterday that there are a number of countries globally that don't have their schools open fully. That's about 189 countries. And the ones which they do have their schools fully open are Sweden, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Belarus, Nicaragua. So, I might just put that in context for everyone. So I did the research for the media for them.

REPORTER:

Premier, Newspoll overnight has your approval rating lower than your counterparts in other states, what's your take...

PREMIER:

I'm just doing the best for Queensland.

REPORTER:

Why you think it is the lowest?

PREMIER:

I'm just doing the best for Queensland.

REPORTER:

Are you concerned by it?

PREMIER:

No, not at all.

REPORTER:

Do you think...do you see it as a judgement on your handling of the pandemic?

PREMIER:

Oh look, I think we've had a few hiccups along the road Patrick but I'm waking up everyday and doing what I can for Queenslanders and that's what they expect me to do. And frankly, the only numbers I'm interested in are these numbers about the number of cases in Queensland and the number of lives that we are saving.

REPORTER:

Do you think they're marking you down too harshly? And what are those hiccups you are talking about?

PREMIER:

No no, I'm just...Michael, I'm doing my best for the people in this state. I'm looking at the health response and economic response.

REPORTER:

When you make the decision about schools on May 15...

PREMIER:

Yes Lydia

REPORTER:

..is there any chance that the schools will just stay as they are now only open to vulnerable students and essential workers? Or will we see schools return in some way?

PREMIER:

No we're looking at getting more class contact between teachers and students. That's my number one goal and I think it's the goal of every other state Premier and territory minister as well. But what we need to see is these really low or zero numbers. I mean this is really encouraging news and Queenslanders are doing this. Queenslanders are doing this.

REPORTER:

So we can expect students back in classrooms in some form or another in May?

PREMIER:

I've said that yesterday, yes.

REPORTER:

Do you think that's playing...there's you know, division and some we've been told, anger from parents about their kids not going back to school, do you think that's reflected in the poll numbers?

PREMIER:

Well Michael I just told you the countries where it's fully back. A handful.

REPORTER:

Yeah. You don't think that's playing in your poll numbers?

PREMIER:

No, I'm doing the best for Queensland that I possibly can. I don't know what more you want me to do.

REPORTER:

Greens have announced their candidate in South Brisbane. How worried are you for your deputy?

PREMIER:

Look, Jaki is working really hard in her electorate as well and she'll be talking to you later about Treasury matters.

REPORTER:

...businesses are asking for some sort of roadmap. I know it's hard now, but to give them some sort of certainty or some sort of planning.

PREMIER:

Yeah, thanks Lane. That's a really good question and it's something that Government is working solidly on. I now have a taskforce convened of health experts with economic experts across Government looking at the staged approach that we can look at opening up the economy. I will have further announcements to make about that in the coming weeks but

once again, it really depends on that epidemiology that we're going to see over the next couple of weeks. So, we're putting all the plans in place. We've got a very clear path to recovery and I'll be sharing that with Queenslanders once we have that final advice.

REPORTER:

Why is Government only prepared to pay one per cent of compensation for the 2011 flood victims?

PREMIER:

Look, these are matters for the courts. And in terms of...the courts will work out the proportionality. But all of the compensation will be paid.

REPORTER:

But that was a decision by the Government to put in that response to the case of one per cent?

PREMIER:

Yeah but the entire amount will be paid out. So, it's the proportionality aspect of it Michael. It's before the courts at the moment so I really don't want to get into any further speculation about it.

REPORTER:

Premier, what about this news that landlords aren't being covered by their insurers when their rental amounts drop? We've got a story on ABC today.

PREMIER:

Oh ok, sorry Josh can I get back to you on that one?

REPORTER:

...tracing app [inaudible]...how many Queenslanders need to sign up?

PREMIER:

We need a lot of Queenslanders to sign up. So can I please urge all families to sign up to the COVID-Safe app. The more families that sign up the greater ability we have to open more Queensland and get the economy moving.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

PREMIER:

I think from memory we needed over 40 per cent. But if we can have a higher rate of sign up fees....sign up for the COVID app I think the better we'll be. The COVIDSafe app.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

PREMIER:

That's a matter for the NRL. The plan has been forwarded to Dr Young. Dr Young is considering that plan and look, we'll get back to everyone. Of course, the principles will be discussed at National Cabinet on Friday.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

PREMIER:

I'll be having a phone conversation with him this week.

REPORTER:

The Budget was supposed to be delivered today. What can you tell Queenslanders about what they're going to see before the election? Are you going to be able to deliver, or is your intention to deliver a full Budget before the election and when do you think could do that?

PREMIER:

Well Michael, it may be hard to deliver a full Budget, our intention is to clearly present a full set of financial statements so the people of Queensland can make their judgements. It may be a mini-Budget, it may be a full economic statement. Government is still working through that, and of course no other state or territory has announced when they're going to actually present their credentials. So, we'll definitely have something out before the election, that's my absolute promise to the people of Queensland.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]

PREMIER:

I'm not quite sure, you can ask the Treasurer that. Okay, Dr Young and then we need to get our injections.

REPORTER:

Clive Palmer has taken out ads saying he's bought a whole bunch – spent a lot of money – on hydroxychloroquine – is it an effective treatment? What else should be used?

DR YOUNG:

A lot of trials are being done around the world at the moment and we need to wait for the outcomes of those trials before we can say whether or not it is of use.

REPORTER:

What is the [inaudible] treatment here in Queensland?

DR YOUNG:

At the moment it is all supportive care. So we do have patients enrolled in trials – so that is happening – but at the moment the best treatment is supportive care and it has been effective in Queensland. Unfortunately, we have seen six Queenslanders die from this infection, but we've had a lot of other Queenslanders go into intensive care and survive.

REPORTER:

[inaudible]?

DR YOUNG:

Yes, there's a number of them. They're all publicly available, so you can see those. There's... they're using different drugs that there have been some suggestion overseas that they might be of benefit.

REPORTER:

[inaudible] daily totals?

DR YOUNG:

Yes, of course we've got that total, we can provide that to you.

REPORTER:

Can I ask Minister Miles a very quick question? Do you know when GPs might be in a position to digitally send out prescriptions rather than mailing them?

MINISTER MILES:

That is something certainly we're working on, shifting from the current system of facsimilies to digital prescriptions. I understand there is a brief on its way to me to approve right now.

REPORTER:

So it is not far away?

MINISTER MILES:

It is not far away, Dr Young can provide more detail.

DR YOUNG:

Yes, we're working through it.

[ENDS]



Station: 7 News Periscope

Program: Press Conference

Interviewee: Annastacia Palaszczuk, Premier

Steven Miles, Minister for Health

Dr Jeanette Young, Chief Health Officer

Mark Furner, Minister for Agriculture

Date: 29 April 2020

Duration: 16mins 4sec

E&OE

PREMIER:

Alright, good morning everybody. Ok so, more good news for Queensland. Last night we only had one confirmed case and that's from a cruise ship so once again what we're seeing is a really great decline in our numbers and of course, over those next two weeks are really crucial like I said for a whole range of reasons. We have over 104,000 tests that have been conducted. 928 people have recovered and now only 94 active cases. I want to talk about a couple of things today and then Minister Furner will talk a bit more about the agricultural sector. But as we know, seasonal work is really important for our regions. Especially for people coming to do the harvest which is really important for a whole range of fruit and vegetables. Of course we've got our avocados, tomatoes, blueberries, mandarins, capsicums and melons where Queensland becomes the food bowl of Australia over the winter season. So we want to make sure that our seasonal workers are abiding by COVID-safe measures and we have actually endorsed a blueprint which actually means that people coming to these areas they need to have a permit, they need to show where they're working and also too, they need to have a plan about where they're going to be residing and staying because what we don't want to see is backpackers living on top of each other during these COVID times. I'm very pleased with the work that's been undertaken. We've been also working with the national Government with this and I know Minister Furner is very pleased because not only have our farmers been talking to us about this but also the regional Mayors. And I'll be having another teleconference this afternoon with Mayors and I'm quite sure that they're going to be really receptive to this as well. Also, you would have seen overnight to that we're getting on with regional road building projects as well. \$185 million joint State and Federal Government. This is for our regional areas. The Flinders Highway, Kennedy Development Road, Golf Development Road, Gregory Highway, the Proserpine to Shute Harbour Road. So we want to really start making sure that we're doing works, bridge repairs, road expansions there, continuing our road projects across regional Queensland as well. So some great news today for regional Queensland looking after our producers but also to our regional roads as well. So

look, I'll hand over to Steven and Dr Young and then Minister Furner will also talk to you a bit more detail about looking after our food bowl of Australia. Thanks Steven.

MINISTER MILES:

So overnight we only have that one Queenslander returning from quarantine in another state having contracted COVID-19 on a cruise ship. That means no new locally acquired cases overnight which is great news for Queensland. Of them 94 are considered active. Just 12 are in hospital but half of those, six, are in ICU receiving ventilation. The other shift in the numbers, really, has been a return to higher rates of testing. So in the last 24 hours we tested 3234 people which if you consider that only one of those returned positive it means that our positive testing rate is incredibly low. We're maintaining that very, very high testing rate.

DR YOUNG:

As you heard we only had that one confirmed case in the last 24 hours associated with a cruise ship. And we have seen an increase in testing with over 3000 Queenslanders getting tested in the last 24 hours which is excellent. Please, could everyone in Queensland, if you develop any symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 – so any cough, shortness of breath, sore throat or fever – please go and see your GP or go to a fever clinic or go to a hospital and get tested. That is really, really important. We do want to pick up every single case so that we can make sure we can contact trace as quickly as we can. And to help us do that, please, every Queenslander consider downloading the COVIDSafe app. That will help us in moving forward once we've sorted out some arrangements with the Commonwealth. It will help us to contact trace more effectively and quicker which is what we always want to achieve. So those two things – if people come forward and get tested. If you've got any concerns at all come forward and get tested. And secondly, consider downloading the app. Thankyou.

MINISTER FURNER:

As the Premier indicated Queensland becomes the food bowl in the next six months and with that comes responsibilities. Responsibilities ensuring that not only those regions but the workers, the employers, the transporters of those workers to the locations on the farms, the accommodation providers. Keep those regions and those people safe from COVID-19. The Palaszczuk Government initiated agriculture as essential right from the outset. In fact I think there's no other state in the nation that declared that forth with. And with that was a result of, which comes natural, and that is the Palaszczuk Government has always recognised agriculture as essential. So we've been working with industry for many months now in terms of leading up to this outcome. In fact, on the 17th of March I wrote to the now Agriculture Federal Minister indicating this as a serious issue in dealing with the volume of workers required come the picking season. We need around about on average per month 10,000 workers to assist on those farms ranging from Mareeba, Cairns down to Burnett, Wide Bay to Metro... Metro... sorry Moreton Bay region north, to deal with the commodities that will provide food for the rest of the nation. In addition no doubt, they provide export opportunities to some of the markets that we're seeing open up around the world currently. With that comes a five point plan that industry is quite satisfied with in terms of looking at self-isolation, people coming to Queensland that wish to work on those properties. In addition, a health management plan that no doubt farmers are accustomed to knowing full well that they

deal with biosecurity management plans already. That will provide information about where the worker's come from, where they're intention is to work, where they intend to reside for that period of time for the work. In addition there'll be better informed management plans in dealing with communications. So we've put up 100 agriculture coordination officers to assist industry in working through those processes. Also we'll be looking at more compliance on a temporary basis for biosecurity staff and also workplace health and safety staff to designated under the public health act to make sure compliance is met. And fifthly we'll be making sure the local disaster management groups have the information and are provided to work through this process during this period of time. Thank you.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]

PREMIER:

Yes, it is disappointing. I just remind all MPs to make sure they are across the Chief Health Officers directions.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]

PREMIER:

Yes, I understand that Commissioner Carroll has addressed that this morning. It is extremely disappointing.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]

PREMIER:

I don't think that's necessary.

REPORTER:

Is it the right decision for him to resign?

PREMIER:

That's a matter for Deb Frecklington. You can ask her today.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]

PREMIER:

Oh look, from what I've seen in my local neighbourhood, people are not gathering together. They might be separate in their driveway but I think it's really important that people observe those social distancing rules. Especially where we can't have, like I said, mass gatherings. I mean, we are not back at that stage. We need to be COVID-safe and everyone needs to set the example.



REPORTER:

[Inaudible]

PREMIER:

Not at this stage.

REPORTER:

With the relaxation of the restrictions, is there any suggestions that the borders will open up?

PREMIER:

No, not straight away Lane. We would have to see long periods of almost zero before we get to that point.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]

PREMIER:

Yes, thanks Josh, that's a really good question. So I have had a very positive meeting yesterday with the NRL. So what we have agreed is their health experts will be speaking with our health experts. They will be looking through and going through that plan. I said that National Cabinet was meeting on Friday to look at some principles that are being formulated around how sports could operate, how those elite sports could operate and we will be having further discussions on Friday afternoon.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]

PREMIER:

It may be next week but I think the key for a lot of these sporting codes is training so we need to prioritise that

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]

PREMIER:

That's a matter for him but there's nothing dissimilar from what they are saying to what we are saying. We are working very closely with our Independent Schools and our Catholic Education system and as I've said at numerous press conferences, we want to see more teacher and student interactions over the coming weeks.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]

PREMIER:

I'm really hoping that Queenslanders and Queensland families act responsibly this weekend and that means if a car park is packed at a national park, please don't go there. If a beach is packed, don't go there. Use your common sense, I think Queenslanders are pretty good when it comes to common sense, so you know we are loosening these stay at home restrictions to give people the ability to get out and about with their families and their loved ones. We have a beautiful climate here in Queensland and I think it's very good for people's mental health but once again we don't want to see those beaches shut, we don't want to see the national parks shut, so it's really going to be dependent on people to take that responsibility seriously.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]

PREMIER:

No, it's very sad that the Logies won't go ahead this year. It brings a lot of money into and the Screen industry really important for Queensland but under the circumstances it just can't go ahead so we look forward to next year, fingers crossed.

REPORTER:

Can I ask Dr Young about the NRL plan that I think you've had for a couple of days? Is it possible to start on May 28 and play matches without any great health risk?

DR YOUNG:

We just need to go through it in detail and talk to them about it and there's also discussions happening at a national level. So it's important that we work together.

REPORTER:

Dr Young, there's also Jarrod Bleijie who has written to you asking for the health advice on schools to go the way they are but you haven't replied yet.

DR YOUNG:

I haven't seen that letter.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]

DR YOUNG:

Yes, people can go out in their own household groups or single people with one other person to have a picnic but again got to maintain that social distance. That's very important.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]

DR YOUNG:

They can't open their own restaurant, they can provide takeaway of course

REPORTER:

Dr Young, would you now say Queensland is over the worst of it? Can you make that call?

DR YOUNG:

If we maintain all of the hard work that we've done then yes, I can see a great trajectory going forward but it's really, really important that we take it slowly and steadily and we look and check how each reduction in restriction works because if we do see a rapid surge in cases, locally acquired cases then we might have to go back. So it's really important that we do things methodically and in a very planned way.

REPORTER:

[Inaudible]

DR YOUNG:

Look, we've got to see how it goes. So certainly, that's what we're doing at the moment and we will work that through and also depends what happens at a national level in terms of the restrictions there.

REPORTER:

What are you looking at in the next two-week block if everything goes well?

DR YOUNG:

That's something that National Cabinet is discussing, and we really need to have that discussion nationally about how we move forward.

REPORTER:

There are reports that some nursing homes are still not allowing people to come inside and not allowing children. Can you give some clarification around that again?

DR YOUNG:

Right, that's true. We are encouraging nursing homes to not have children under the age of 16. Because it's a bit hard to work out sometimes whether they've got symptoms or not. At this stage, we would still prefer our aged care facilities limit the number of visitors and don't encourage children, unless off course it's in that terrible end-of-life stage when grandparents and great grandparents would value seeing children.

REPORTER:

As children aren't at that much risk of spreading the virus, can you just explain why that advice that kids don't visit their grandparents?

DR YOUNG:

Because these are very vulnerable people in our aged care facility. They are actually the most vulnerable people and you would have seen again in new South Wales, they've got another outbreak in one of their aged care facility and they've had a number of deaths. So

we've really got to be very, very careful about our aged care facilities. But I think despite that, we can allow visitors but again, that's got to be a decision for each aged care facility to make. They know their patients, they know their risks and they know what they can put in place so I encourage aged care facilities wherever possible to enable visitors for their residents.

REPORTER:

Premier, can I ask just one more question on the public servant pay. Yesterday, the Treasurer said that a lot of the public servants are willing to not have a pay rise over the coming year. Where are we with that and does it, your ban on the rise is that for current EBA's or ones that would be coming up?

PREMIER:

All of that will be detailed but we said there'll be a pay freeze for this financial year, the whole year.

[ENDS]

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