

**PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**Department of Health**

**Senate Select Committee on COVID-19**

**Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic**

**13 May 2020**

**PDR Number: IQ20-000232**

**Question Subject:** State and federal Governments correspondence regarding NW outbreak

**Type of Question:** Written

**Senator:** Katy Gallagher

**Question:**

Is there any correspondence between the State and Federal Governments in relation to the matters NW outbreak? Can this be tabled?

**Answer:**

Correspondence between the Tasmania and Commonwealth Governments in relation to matters of the North-West Tasmania outbreak occurred as follows:

Australian Government Department of Home Affairs – Emergency Management Australia (EMA).

On 11 April 2020, a request from the Tasmanian Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management, seeking the provision of cleaning, kitchen and patient attendant staff for two days commencing on 12 April 2020 (Attachment A).

On 12 April 2020, an email from the Tasmanian Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management, requesting Australian Government non-financial assistance to establish a field emergency department/primary care service in Burnie, Tasmania, including the formal request document (Attachment B).

Between 12 April 2020 and 13 April 2020, email correspondence between EMA and the Tasmanian Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management, confirming that the Australian Defence Force accepts the request to provide assistance with the provision of a field emergency department at Burnie, Tasmania (Attachment C).

Australian Government Department of Health

On 18 April 2020, the Tasmania Department of Health contacted the Commonwealth Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer regarding the health workforce needs in North West Tasmania and whether these could be met by the deployment of Australian Medical Assistance Teams or Defence medical teams.

Between 26 April 2020 and 16 May 2020, email correspondence occurred between the Tasmania Department of Health and the Australian Government of Department of Health, in its National Focal Point role under the *National Health Security Act 2007*. This correspondence related to close contacts associated with the North-West Tasmania outbreak for the purpose of contact tracing.

## **REQUEST FOR AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT NON-FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

### **SUBJECT:**

**Event:** National COVID 19 Pandemic - Response to Staff Shortages at North West Regional Hospital (NWRH) Tasmania

**Request:** Seeking assistance with staffing due to significant staff shortage as a result of COVID-19 Outbreak and furlough of critical resources.

### **DATE:**

Request submitted on Saturday 11 April 2020 at 2100.

### **REQUEST ID:**

DPFEM – A20/72131

### **SITUATION:**

North West Regional Hospital has experienced an outbreak of COVID-19 with 45 positive healthcare workers resulting in a significant furlough of existing nursing, medical and support staff. NWRH cannot safely staff the hospital Attendant position with resulting impacts to manual handling and nursing support. There is also a critical shortage of cleaners and kitchen aids which is impacting ability to provide sufficient cleaning in the context of the outbreak.

### **OWN RESOURCES:**

NWRH has sought assistance from other facilities within the THS. Attendants cannot be provided and only two cleaners have been able to be moved from the Mersey Community Hospital. Labour hire are reluctant to assist given the outbreak.

### **PRIORITY:**

ASAP – Shortfalls exist all shifts currently.

### **DELIVERY LOCATION:**

North West Regional Hospital Brickport Road, Burnie, Tasmania.

### **TASK DESCRIPTION:**

Staff are requested for the following duties:

- 2 shifts of 2 cleaning staff
  - Shift times are 0600-1400 and 1130-1930
  - Training will be provided by NWRH Team
- 2 shifts of 4 Kitchen Staff
  - Shift times are 0600-1400 and 1130-1930
  - Training will be provided by NWRH Team
  - duties include general assistance in the kitchen and delivering of meal trolleys.
- 1 Attendant 24hr support
  - Could be achieved in shifts of 12 or 8 hours
  - Duties include manual handling of patients, couriering between wards and pathology, moving beds and moving equipment.

**CONTACT NAME & DETAILS:**

Department of Health:

- [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

State Emergency Service:

- [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**APPROVED BY JURISDICTIONAL NOMINATED OFFICIAL:**

This request has been approved by Deputy Commissioner [REDACTED] in his capacity as the Acting State Controller for Tasmania's response to COVID 19.

**COMMENTS:**

Requesting assistance for the period of 12 to 13 April 2020 with possible extension if unable to secure local contractors.

There may be a requirement for staff attending to be in quarantine either during or following provision of the services. I will ask for this to be confirmed as soon as possible and I will advise.

Local liaison has occurred with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].

## **REQUEST FOR AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT NON-FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

**SUBJECT:** Provision of field emergency department/primary care service in Burnie, Tasmania

**EVENT:** National COVID 19 Pandemic - Response to Staff Shortages at North West Regional Hospital (NWRH) Tasmania

**REQUEST:** Seeking assistance with staffing due to significant staff shortage as a result of COVID-19 Outbreak and furlough of critical resources.

**DATE:** Request submitted on Sunday 12th April 1600

**REQUEST ID:** DPFEM – A20/72175

### **SITUATION:**

The North West Regional Hospital in Burnie faces Australia's worst hospital outbreak for coronavirus. Sequential quarantining of staff has not been successful in containing the spread. As of 0700 on 13/4 all staff at the North West Regional Hospital (NWRH) and North West Private Hospital (NWPH) will be quarantined. This will lead to the closure of the two hospitals. While there are plans in place for routine and inpatient clinical services, this will leave the entirety of the West Coast without an emergency service for up to two weeks.

### **OWN RESOURCES:**

All staff at the NWRH (including emergency department staff) are to be quarantined and so are unavailable to staff the Department. Staff elsewhere in the state are occupied in providing emergency services in their own regions and consequently not available.

### **PRIORITY:**

For establishment of service by the morning of Wednesday 14th April 2020

### **DELIVERY LOCATION:**

North West Regional Hospital Emergency Department, 23 Brickport Road, Burnie, TAS 7320

### **TASK DESCRIPTION:**

An appropriately staffed emergency department response will be required for the North West and West Coast community, out of the existing emergency department infrastructure of the NWRH. This will require the provision of primary care, acute resuscitation, minor procedures and consulting care. No inpatient care or wards cover will be provided, as all patients requiring inpatient care will be transferred to other facilities. Retrieval support will

be provided by the Aeromedical Retrieval Service of Ambulance Tasmania. Ambulance service or bypass will be determined based on skill set.

**CONTACT NAME & DETAILS:**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**APPROVED BY JURISDICTIONAL NOMINATED OFFICIAL:**

This request has been approved by Commissioner [REDACTED] in his capacity as the State Controller for Tasmania's response to COVID 19, staffed by:

Director State Emergency Service, [REDACTED]

**COMMENTS:**

Deployment would not be required for more than two weeks, as after this the local staff would be out of quarantine and ready to return to work. All accommodation, food and related support would be provided by the jurisdiction.

Local liaison has occurred with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].

[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:**

Monday, 13 April 2020 8:34 PM

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Cc:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:**

HPRM: Defence Acceptance - Request Support to Department of Health for COVID-19 - Tasmania

Good evening [REDACTED] and [REDACTED],

Defence accepts the request for assistance to the Tasmania Department of Health for a period of two weeks from Wed 15 Apr 20 to support health services at the NW Regional Hospital, Burnie, Tasmania. Defence will be in support of AUSMAT as the Commonwealth lead.

A deed between Defence and the Tasmanian Government has been drafted. Defence support will commence after the deed has been signed by both parties.

Defence will not seek cost recovery for this support.

Regards

[REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Sunday, 12 April 2020 7:51 PM

[REDACTED]

**Subject:** DACC Request Support to Department of Health for COVID-19 - Tasmania

[REDACTED]

Per earlier discussion today, please accept this DACC request for health services in support of NW Regional Hospital, Burnie, Tasmania.

Local liaison has occurred with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

State Emergency Service, Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management  
Corner Argyle & Melville Streets, HOBART TAS 7000  
GPO Box 1290, HOBART TAS 7001



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# **PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE**

## **Department of Health**

### **Senate Select Committee on COVID-19**

#### **Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic**

**13 May 2020**

**PDR Number:** IQ20-000225

**Question Subject:** Sufficient PPE and training in Australia

**Type of Question:** Written

**Senator:** Katy Gallagher

**Question:**

When the COVID pandemic hit Australia was there sufficient PPE and training providing in its use in Australia?

a. And what about in Tasmania, particularly in NW Tasmania?

**Answer:**

The National Medical Stockpile (NMS) is a strategic reserve of drugs, vaccines, antidotes and personal protective equipment for use in the national response to a public health emergency and exists to supplement holdings of state and territory health authorities to support continuity of service provision. The commencement of the COVID-19 pandemic prompted the Government to significantly increase the range and quantity of its personal protective equipment (PPE) holdings.

The Tasmanian Government requested access to the NMS (for the purposes of COVID-19) on 24 March 2020, 17 April 2020, 4 May 2020 and 12 May 2020.

The Department of Health is aware of regional and international shortages of PPE, particularly in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. The initial concern related to the provision of masks has now been addressed with substantial purchases by the NMS, states and territories and the private market. The Department is managing national and international shortages of required PPE products and is providing supplies of available products, primarily PPE, to frontline healthcare workers.

As at 7am 17 June 2020, more than 921,000 people have completed the Department of Health's Infection Control Training module. This includes more than 137,000 people working in aged care, 69,000 in disability care, and 56,000 primary care workers.