

**HOME AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO
DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS**

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY WRITTEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Select Committee COVID-19

QoN Number: CV19-366

Subject: Prioritising Australians

Asked by: Kristina Keneally

Question:

Is your agency aware of any Australian Government policy, process or procedure that is in place to ensure that stranded Australians will be prioritised over other potential entrants to Australia?

a. If yes:

i. Can you name those policies, processes or procedures?

ii. When did these policies, processes or procedures come into effect?

b. If no:

i. Are any policies, processes or procedures being prepared to ensure that stranded?

Answer:

- a. Yes. On 18 September 2020, the Prime Minister detailed the process by which the Australian Government is prioritising financial support, consular assistance, and assistance to return home for stranded Australians. This follows an earlier announcement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs on 2 September 2020 of the expansion of measures to support vulnerable Australians overseas.

The Australian Government's stated commitment is to support Australians that wish to return to Australia. National Cabinet provides a mechanism through which Commonwealth, State and Territory governments can discuss consular support being provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in the context of COVID-19 to assist Australian citizens to return to Australia.

DFAT continues to assist Australians wishing to return to Australia through its overseas missions, within the current caps on international passenger arrivals. DFAT works with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, the Department of Home Affairs and airlines to get vulnerable Australians on available seats. Airlines are commercial ventures and the Australian Government cannot control who seats are sold to or at what price.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs has made available a Special Overseas Hardship Fund, expanding the existing financial assistance program with further emergency assistance for the most vulnerable Australian citizens overseas.

- i. COVID-19: Overseas financial assistance (Hardship Program).
The Hardship Program includes two types of interest-free loans to vulnerable Australian citizens and their families overseas: emergency living costs loans, and emergency repatriation loans.
Emergency repatriation loans are available to help cover the costs of commercial flights to Australia, where available. Where a flight to Australia can be arranged, a one-off emergency repatriation loan can help cover the cost of the economy class component. The Australian Government will cover the remaining cost of the ticket. The emergency repatriation loan can be used to secure flights where these are available but fares have increased.
Further information can be found at:
<https://www.smartraveller.gov.au/COVID-19/covid-19-overseas-financial-assistance>
- ii. The Foreign Minister announced the Hardship Program on 2 September 2020.

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PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY WRITTEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Select Committee COVID-19

QoN Number: CV19-376

Subject: Briefings prepared - International Flight Cap

Asked by: Kristina Keneally

Question:

For each of the following, please provide the relevant dates the brief was prepared, the title of the brief, and to whom the brief was provided to:

- a. Briefs prepared for Ministers on the impact of introducing the international flight cap, before Prime Minister announced the cap on 10 July 2020.
- b. Briefs prepared internally in your Department for SES members on the impact of introducing the international flight cap, before Prime Minister announced the cap on 10 July 2020.
- c. Briefs prepared for Ministers on the impact of the international flight cap, from 10 July 2020 to 24 September 2020.
- d. Briefs prepared internally in your Department for SES members on the impact of international flight cap, 10 July 2020 to 24 September 2020.
- e. Briefs prepared for Ministers on options for the Commonwealth to provide additional support to the States to manage quarantine for international arrivals other than providing ADF personnel from 10 July 2020 to 24 September 2020.
- f. Briefs prepared internally in your Department for SES members on options for the Commonwealth to provide additional support to the States to manage quarantine for international arrivals other than providing ADF personnel from 10 July 2020 to 24 September 2020.

Answer:

- a. Nil from Home Affairs.
- b. Nil from Home Affairs.
- c. Five security classified Ministerial briefs were prepared by Home Affairs during the specified period of time.

One unclassified Ministerial brief was prepared by Home Affairs during the specified period of time as follows:

28 August 2020 - Meeting Brief - Minister Dutton meeting with Ms Zali Steggall MP - Travel Exemption Issues

- d. The following briefs referencing the impacts of international flight caps were prepared for various Department of Home Affairs SES during the specified period of time:

Date	Title	Type of Brief
24 September 2020	Briefing E-Pack – Select Committee on COVID-19	SES Senate Select Committee Brief
22 September 2020	National Coordination Mechanism (NCM) Managing Returns to Australia Working Group: Meeting Record	Record of Meeting
22 September 2020	A security classified brief	
17 September 2020	A security classified brief	
15 September 2020	A security classified brief	
15 September 2020	A security classified brief	
15 September 2020	NCM Managing Returns to Australia Working Group: Meeting Record	Record of Meeting
8 September 2020	NCM Managing Returns to Australia Working Group: Meeting Record	Record of Meeting
8 September 2020	A security classified brief	
7 September 2020	A security classified brief	
1 September 2020	NCM Managing Returns to Australia Working Group: Meeting Record	Record of Meeting
25 August 2020	NCM Managing Returns to Australia Working Group: Meeting Record	Record of Meeting
19 August 2020	A security classified brief	
18 August 2020	NCM Managing Returns to Australia Working Group: Meeting Record	Record of Meeting
17 August 2020	A security classified brief	
13 August 2020	A security classified brief	
12 August 2020	A security classified brief	
11 August 2020	NCM Managing Returns to Australia Working Group: Meeting Record	Record of Meeting
10 August 2020	A security classified brief	
5 August 2020	A security classified brief	
4 August 2020	A security classified brief	
4 August 2020	NCM Managing Returns to Australia Working Group: Meeting Record	Record of Meeting
3 August 2020	A security classified brief	
28 July 2020	NCM Managing Returns to Australia Working Group: Meeting Record	Record of Meeting
24 July 2020	NCM Managing Returns to Australia Working Group: Meeting Record	Record of Meeting
23 July 2020	A security classified brief	
21 July 2020	NCM Managing Returns to Australia Working Group: Meeting Record	Record of Meeting
17 July 2020	NCM Managing Returns to Australia Working Group: Meeting Record	Record of Meeting
17 July 2020	NCM Management International Arrivals Working Group	Record of Meeting
16 July 2020	A security classified brief	

14 July 2020	NCM Managing Returns to Australia Working Group: Meeting Record	Record of Meeting
14 July 2020	NCM Managing International Arrivals Working Group: Meeting Record	Record of Meeting
14 July 2020	NCM Managing International Arrivals: One Page Brief	Record of Meeting
11 July 2020	Managing Returns to Australia Working Group: Meeting Record	Record of Meeting
10 July 2020	Managing Returns to Australia Working Group: Meeting Record	Record of Meeting

- e. One security classified Ministerial brief was prepared by Home Affairs during the specified period of time.

One unclassified Ministerial brief was prepared by Home Affairs during the specified period of time as follows:

17 September 2020 – Emergency Management Australia delegations following Departmental restructure

- f. The following briefs referencing quarantine options for international arrivals other than providing ADF personnel were prepared for Department of Home Affairs SES during the specified period of time:

24 September 2020 – Briefing E-Pack – Select Committee on COVID-19

17 September 2020 – Paper – Howard Springs Quarantine Facility – Property Branch

16 September 2020 – PMCD Options Paper – CI Quarantine Facility

15 September 2020 – A security classified brief

9 September 2020 – Christmas Island

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PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY WRITTEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Select Committee COVID-19

QoN Number: CV19-377

Subject: Measures to Support Australians Overseas

Asked by: Kristina Keneally

Question:

On 21 August the Prime Minister said that he had tasked the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs and Defence to bring forward measures to support Australians overseas.

- a. What measures have been brought forward by the department to support Australians overseas?
- i. When were these measures brought forward and what agencies were consulted in their development?

Answer:

- a. A Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) administered Hardship Program was announced by Government on 2 September 2020. The Hardship Program provides interest-free loans and grants to support vulnerable Australians overseas.
 - i. On 16 August 2020, DFAT was asked to develop measures to expand support to Australians overseas. In preparing these measures, DFAT consulted the Department of Home Affairs, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Department of Finance, the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, and Services Australia.