

DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY WRITTEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

QoN Number: CV19-28

Subject: Cruise ship ban - Secretary advice

Asked by: Kristina Keneally

Question:

1. Prior to providing written advice to the Acting Secretary for Health on 16 March regarding the 18 March Determination ("The Cruise Ship Ban"), what steps did Secretary Pezzullo take to satisfy himself that measures included in The Cruise Ship Ban would not endanger the Australian community?
2. In relation to question 1, did Secretary Pezzullo:
 - a. Enquire about which cruise ships would be allowed to enter Australia under 5(b) of the Determination? If so, how?
 - b. Enquire about the health status of passengers onboard those ships? If so, how?

Answer:

Prior to providing written advice to the Acting Secretary of the Department of Health on 16 March 2020, Secretary Pezzullo:

- considered the 9 March 2020 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade updated traveller advice for individuals to reconsider cruise travel;
- considered the Department of Health National Incident Room daily updates (relevantly the update of 11 March 2020);
- discussed the issue with the Australian Border Force Commissioner;
- received a briefing to support his attendance at the National Security Committee of Cabinet meeting on 12 March 2020; and
- reviewed the outcomes of the National Cabinet on 15 March 2020 and the Prime Minister's subsequent 15 March 2020 press conference articulating the cruise ship ban.

Secretary Pezzullo considered these briefings and advice then directed that letters be prepared. Secretary Pezzullo's 16 March 2020 correspondence with the Acting Secretary of Health outlined the implementation requirements to effect the National Cabinet's decision. The Department of Health also used health advice to support Minister Hunt's consideration of the 18 March 2020 Determination.

In Secretary Pezzullo's correspondence of 16 March 2020, he outlined the importance of the *National Health Protocol for Managing COVID-19 Risks* from Cruise Ships. Further, he highlighted that the Minister for Health retains the discretion under s477 and 478 of the *Biosecurity Act 2015* (Cth) to make decisions relating to the human biosecurity emergency.

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PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY WRITTEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

QoN Number: CV19-29

Subject: Cruise Ship Ban - Minister Briefing

Asked by: Kristina Keneally

Question:

Did Secretary Pezzullo brief Minister Dutton or his office about The Cruise Ship Ban prior to the arrival of the Ruby Princess?

a. Did the Minister or his office enquire about which ships would be allowed to enter Australia under 5(b) of the Determination, or about the health status of passengers onboard those ships?

Answer:

Yes.

The Minister enquired about ships that were impacted by 5(b) of the Determination and the status of passengers.

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AUSTRALIAN BORDER FORCE**

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY WRITTEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Select Committee on COVID-19

QoN Number: CV19-31

Subject: ABF Commissioner Exemptions

Asked by: Kristina Keneally

Question:

How many ABF Commissioner exemptions have been granted for:

- a. Arrivals
- b. By visa subclass
 - i. 155; 157; 400; 403; 407; 417; 457; 462; 482; 485; 500 (RRV/temporary)
 - ii. 600; 601; 651; 771 (tourist/short stay)
 - iii. 785; 790 (TPV/SHEV)
 - iv. Any other visa subclasses
- c. Departures
 - i. Australian citizens
 - ii. Non-citizens
- d. Please provide the number of exemptions—arrivals and departures—by the category of exemption (e.g. compassionate grounds, essential services, business movements).

Answer:

- a. As of 11 May a total of 7,079 Inwards Commissioner Discretion exemptions have been granted since 2 February 2020.
- b. ABF is unable to provide a breakdown on exemptions granted by visa subclasses without an unreasonable diversion of resources to manually check each exemption grant.
- c. As of 11 May a total of 3,546 Outwards Commissioner Discretion exemptions have been granted to Australian citizens and Permanent Residents since 24 March 2020. Non-citizens (apart from permanent residents) do not need to seek an exemption to leave Australia.

- d. The number of arrival Commissioner Discretion grants are:
- i. 5,097 transit travellers.
 - ii. 112 foreign nationals travelling at the invitation of the Australian Commonwealth Government for the purpose of assisting in the COVID-19 response or whose entry would be in the national interest.
 - iii. 14 critical medical services, including air ambulance and delivery of supplies that regularly arrive into Australia from international ports.
 - iv. 587 persons with critical skills (for example, medical specialists, engineers, marine pilots and crews) by exception.
 - v. Nil person or any person in a class of persons who, in the opinion of the Chief Medical Officer does not pose a risk of significant harm to the public health and will provide an essential service while in Australia.
 - vi. 1269 case-by-case exemptions for humanitarian or compassionate reasons.

The number of departure exemption grants are:

- i. 16 persons whose travel is as part of the response to the COVID-19 outbreak, including the provision of aid.
- ii. 130 persons whose travel is essential for the conduct of critical industries and business (including export and import industries).
- iii. 5 persons who are travelling to receive urgent medical treatment that is not available in Australia.
- iv. 203 persons who are travelling on urgent and unavoidable personal business.
- v. 3164 on compassionate or humanitarian grounds.
- vi. 28 where the travel is in the national interest.

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PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY WRITTEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Select Committee on COVID-19

QoN Number: CV19-45

Subject: OSB - Boats Turned Back

Asked by: Kristina Keneally

Question:

How many boats have been turned back since 19 March?

Answer:

Please refer to the relevant Operation Sovereign Borders monthly updates published online via the Australian Border Force Newsroom at <https://newsroom.abf.gov.au/channels/Operation-Sovereign-Borders> for the latest information on returned maritime people smuggling ventures.

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PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY WRITTEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Select Committee on COVID-19

QoN Number: CV19-46

Subject: OSB - Social Media Communication

Asked by: Kristina Keneally

Question:

What is the reach of social media communication activity designed to deter people from travelling to Australia by boat since 19 March to 8 May? What was the figure for 19 March to 8 May 2019?

Answer:

Between 19 March 2020 and 8 May 2020, social media strategic communication activity under Operation Sovereign Borders had a total audience reach of 14,509,622 persons across source and transit countries.

It is not possible to provide the statistics for the same date range in 2019 because of the way data was collected at that time, which was on a calendar month basis.

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PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY WRITTEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Select Committee on COVID-19

QoN Number: CV19-59

Subject: ABF Engagement with Department of Health

Asked by: Kristina Keneally

Question:

When did Border Force first engage with Department of Health on border measures that needed to be implemented in response to the virus outbreak in China?

What was the nature of those initial consultations/discussions?

Answer:

23 January 2020.

This is a matter for the Department of Health.