

COVID-19

Inquiry into the Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic
– 29 September 2020

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Defence

Topic: Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 - Q20 - 29 September 2020 - Measures to evacuate Australians - Keneally

Question reference number: 20

Senator/Member: Kristina Keneally

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 13 October 2020

Question:

Please provide a detailed explanation of the measures take to evacuate Australians from Wuhan and the Diamond Princess, and your agency's role. Please include the following information:

- a) How many Australians were evacuated and placed in quarantine in each facility?
- b) What were the total costs to Government for the evacuation?
 - i. What was the cost to your agency for the evacuation?
- c) Please provide a detailed outline of the legislative framework/Act used to implement quarantine for these evacuations, and your agency's involvement in implementing quarantine.
- d) Please provide any details of cooperation with States/Territories to implement these evacuations and quarantine by your agency.
 - i. Please include details of any contracts / costs that your agency commissioned the State / Territory to deliver.
- e) Please indicate which agency was responsible for the following – and your agency's relationship / work with these agencies on these topics:
 - i. Managing repatriation flights
 - ii. Managing quarantine facilities
 - iii Managing the public health aspects of quarantine
- f) Please provide a list of any private contractors, consultants or service providers that were used by your agency to facilitate the evacuation and quarantine of these Australians. Please include the following information:
 - i. nature of the service being provided
 - ii Value of the contract
 - iii Name of the private contractors, consultants or service provider
 - iv Date the contract between the private contractor, consultant or service provider was signed – under existing contract

Answer:

- a) The Department of Defence (Defence) is not responsible for the repatriation of Australians overseas nor responsible for coordinating the domestic disembarkation of passengers from cruise ships.
- b) The costs to Defence to support evacuation measures were approximately \$3.9 million to prepare facilities at Howard Springs and Christmas Island, and undertake staging preparations at RAAF Base Learmonth. Access control services were also provided at Howard Springs.

Defence supported the Australian Government's evacuation efforts through a range of capabilities including: supporting the establishment and operation of a quarantine facility at Christmas Island, garrison support services at RAAF Bases Learmonth and Darwin, the establishment of a quarantine facility at Howard Springs, and domestic air lift support to move personnel and equipment.

- c) Defence provided support to the Australian Border Force under the Defence Assistance to the Civil Community framework.
- d) The Department of Defence worked closely with other Commonwealth agencies and the Northern Territory Government to support evacuation arrangements including with the NT Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics, Department of Health, and NT Police. Defence did not commission any costs to States and Territories.
- e) Under the evacuation lead of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Defence supported the ground handling to Commonwealth assisted flights and Australian Border Force flights at RAAF Bases Darwin and Learmonth, and supported the Australian Border Force in providing garrison support services at quarantine facilities at Christmas Island and Howard Springs.
- f) Defence utilised the existing Base Services Contract to provide garrison support and services at Howard Springs and Christmas Island. The contractors and values of extant contracts are publicly available through AusTender.