

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Inquiry into Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Written Question on Notice, 1 October 2021

PDR Number: IQ21-000257

New home quarantine arrangements

Written

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Question

1. Has Health advised the Department of Home Affairs with respect to the implementation of seven-day home quarantine arrangements for Australians returning from overseas?
 - a.) If yes, what advice has been provided? Please provide that advice.
 - b.) Is the 14-day quarantine window used in hotel quarantine no longer advised?

Answer:

Quarantine arrangements are a matter for state and territory governments as each jurisdiction is responsible for managing the COVID-19 response under its public health legislation.

The Department of Health and Home Affairs remain in regular communication on COVID-19 matters, including but not limited to quarantine and international borders.

The Australian Government encourages less resource-intensive modified quarantine arrangements, such as home quarantine, if they can be safely managed in line with national guidance and retain community confidence.

In 2021, the Doherty Institute, through the University of Melbourne was contracted to provide modelling to inform the Commonwealth's approach to reopening international borders in support of Australia's economic recovery in 2021 and beyond.

On 2 July 2021, National Cabinet agreed to a National Plan to transition Australia's COVID-19 response (National Plan) consisting of four phases defined by achievement of vaccination thresholds broadly expressed as a percentage of the eligible population (aged 16+ years).

Modelling from the Doherty Institute was used to define target levels of coverage sufficient to transition between:

- A. Current Phase – Vaccinate, prepare and pilot, with a continuing focus on strongly suppressing the virus, including through the use of early and stringent short lockdowns, for the purpose of minimising community transmission
- B. Post vaccination phase – focused on minimisation of serious illness, hospitalisation and fatality as a result of COVID-19 through a combination of vaccination and some ongoing degree of light social restrictions, with lockdowns deemed unlikely
- C. Consolidation phase – public health management of COVID-19 consistent with other infections, but no lockdown requirement, and
- D. Final phase – removal of all border restrictions.

The National Plan also includes a second review of national hotel quarantine arrangements. This will build on the first review conducted in 2020 and has been undertaken by Ms Jane Halton AO PSM, with support from The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. The report is expected to be finalised and tabled at National Cabinet in October 2021.