

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Parliamentary inquiry –

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Defence

Topic: Select Committee COVID-19 (In-Camera) - 11 June 2020 - Q1 Resources to NT Health Facilities - Siewert

Question reference number: 1

Senator/Member: Rachel Siewert

Type of question: Spoken

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 24 June 2020

Question:

Senator SIEWERT: Thank you. Were any additional resources provided to the NT health facilities in case they were needed?

Lt Gen. Frewen: We have had negotiations with the NT health facilities around how we would manage an outbreak, but I would probably have to take on notice specifically whether anything tangible has been given to them.

Answer:

Defence has been closely engaged with the Northern Territory (NT) Department of Health throughout this pandemic period and undertook a detailed health planning process for the US Marine entry into the Northern Territory in close consultation with the NT Department of Health.

Defence ensured all appropriate mitigations were established, including a quarantine plan, access to COVID-19 testing, a robust outbreak management plan and strong enforcement of physical distancing and personal hygiene. The arrival of the Marines occurred in a staged way to accommodate the capacity of the Northern Territory healthcare system if an outbreak was to occur.

All Australian Defence Force (ADF) planning is based upon reducing any impact upon the Australian Health system and full transparency through consultation with the jurisdictional Chief Health Officers and the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee.

Whilst not specific to the Marine rotation, Defence has had in place resources in support of NT Health including:

- ADF Liaison Officers embedded in the NT Emergency Operations Centre in Darwin and the Southern Regional Incident Management Team in Alice Springs. As well as

planning and health staff support to the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre.

- ADF members have assisted with the reception, staging, onward movement and integration of Australian civilians arriving into or transiting the NT or prior to their entry into NT quarantine (e.g. Howard Springs Quarantine Facility). This included ADF air movements, security and logistic staff support as well as the provision of personal protective equipment.
- Health staff support assistance to the Australian Medical Assistance Teams responsible for the health processing of each civilian 'Venture' flight arriving into the NT since January 2020.