



Senator Katy Gallagher

Shadow Minister for Finance
Shadow Minister for the Public Service
Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate
Senator for the Australian Capital Territory

Professor Paul Kelly
Chief Medical Officer
Department of Health
Canberra

Sent via email:

Dear Professor Kelly

It has been reported that the Prime Minister, Mr Morrison, has been granted certain exemptions, with appropriate risk mitigation measures in place, for people arriving into the ACT from a COVID-affected area. It has been reported you have played a role in the development of those measures.

I seek confirmation of your role and a full copy of the risk mitigation measures that currently apply to the Prime Minister.

I was concerned to see the face-to-face press conference conducted today at The Lodge with several individuals entering an apparent quarantine zone.

Can you please advise: Was this press conference approved by you; were those individuals who attended the press conference risk managed once they departed The Lodge; and what arrangements are in place for similar events during the Prime Minister's period of quarantine?

Canberrans, like all Australians, have sacrificed a lot over the past 18 months throughout the pandemic and I am very concerned that risks presented by those who are arriving in the ACT from COVID-affected areas such as greater Sydney are managed appropriately and without favour.

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) has issued several statements about minimising the risk of transmission and infection in managed quarantine programs.

I seek confirmation the arrangements put in place for the Prime Minister align with the advice outlined in these statements, including the placing of requirements on those who come into contact with the Prime Minister during this quarantine period, and ask how compliance is being monitored.

Persons subject to the requirements would appear to include not only those who attended the press conference today but also those who have contact with the Prime

Minister during his quarantine period because they work at The Lodge, transport the Prime Minister to and from The Lodge, and/or work at or attend Parliament House.

Considering the seriousness of the issues raised in this letter I ask for your urgent response.

Yours sincerely

Katy Gallagher
Senator for the Australian Capital Territory

21 July 2021

cc – Dr Kerryn Coleman, ACT Chief Health Officer.



Australian Government

Department of Health

Chief Medical Officer

Senator Katy Gallagher
Shadow Minister for Finance
Shadow Minister for the Public Service
Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate
Senator for the Australian Capital Territory
PHILLIP, ACT, 2602

Dear Senator Gallagher,

Thank you for your letter dated 21 July 2021 regarding the Prime Minister and risk mitigation measures for his arrival into the ACT, following his stay in Sydney.

I have been working with the ACT Chief Health Officer and the Australian Parliament House (APH) to manage the COVID-19 risk related to essential parliamentary travel throughout the pandemic.

My medical advice was sought on the risk presented by Parliamentarians and their staff travelling to the ACT from high-risk COVID-19 areas. My letter to the Prime Minister on 18 July 2021 is attached for your reference.

Yours sincerely

Professor Paul Kelly
22 July 2021



Australian Government
Department of Health

Chief Medical Officer

The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
CANBERRA

Dear Prime Minister

I write to you with advice regarding the proposed resumption of Parliament on 3 August 2021.

I work very closely with all Chief Health Officers and especially the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Chief Health Officer, Dr Kerry Coleman, on issues affecting the Australian Parliament.

The recent New South Wales (NSW) outbreak continues to grow, demonstrating the impact of the higher transmissibility of the Delta variant.¹ As you know, the Greater Sydney, Central Coast, Blue Mountains, Wollongong and Shellharbour regions of NSW have been declared as COVID-19 affected areas. The epidemiological situation is not improving at this time, with cases of unlinked community transmission and individuals interacting with the community while infectious including seeding of infection into other jurisdictions.

The travel of Members and Senators who reside in Sydney to the ACT presents a significant risk to ACT residents, particularly those who work in the Australian Parliament House (APH).

A transmission event within APH also has the potential to impact the function of government due to quarantine and isolation requirements, as well as the broader public health restrictions required by ACT Health. Noting that APH is now at near normal function and capacity significant additional mitigations would need to be implemented such as APH staff working from home, cancelling public access or

¹ <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/stats-nsw.aspx>

visitations and reviewing density requirements, amenities and services such as gym access.

Given the risks outlined above, I have discussed and reached a common understanding with Dr Coleman on guidance and core principles to minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

These guidelines (attached) outline the core principles to reduce these risks. For work to be conducted in the APH, anyone from a high risk area within the first 14 days of arrival in the ACT need to undertake the following:

- have an initial negative PCR test and subsequent test results;
- undertake the testing regime as outlined in the attached;
- complete the declaration regarding the essential nature of the work;
- provide awareness to the Presiding Officers; and
- continue to adhere to the ACT public health directions.

Further, it should be noted that the 14 day quarantine period will need to commence on or before Monday 19 July 2021 for the August sitting period.

It is my opinion that a limited number of persons who may be required to attend APH for the purposes of the continuity of government during their 14 day quarantine period and who undertake to strictly adhere to the guidelines would represent a very small risk. The addition of daily saliva testing to the previous arrangements will further mitigate that risk. Interactions with staff at the APH should be minimised. Strict mask use and daily testing should also be applied to any staff who are involved in transportation between a place of quarantine and the APH as well as those who are required to be in the office at the same time and cannot appropriately social distance.

With regard to your proposed quarantine at the Lodge, I understand that the previous quarantine arrangements which have applied to the Lodge, including the designation of red and green zones, have been developed by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet on advice from ACT Health.

It is my opinion that a small group of vaccinated individuals could attend the Lodge if they undertake to strictly adhere to the APH guidelines. I note that this would represent a departure from the standard approach to quarantine in the ACT and other jurisdictions. I would recommend the addition of mask wearing and daily saliva testing for anyone attending or moving in and out of the Lodge to further mitigate that risk.

With regard to in-person press conferences during the 14 day quarantine period, the risk of COVID-19 transmission could be minimised by adhering to the APH guidelines and in particular if attendees are fully vaccinated, strict mask use, physical distancing and utilising an outdoor venue. On balance, to minimise disruption to the operation of the APH and risk of transmission in that setting, my advice is that these could occur at the Lodge.

With these extra precautions, a very small, but not zero risk would remain that COVID-19 could be seeded into the ACT community.

I am mindful of the essential role of the Presiding Officers of the Parliament. I will continue to work with them, your office and other relevant stakeholders with a view to ensuring that the APH continues to be a COVIDSafe workplace.

As always, I am very happy to discuss these matters with you further if required.

Yours sincerely

Professor Paul Kelly
Chief Medical Officer

18 July 2021



Australian Government

Department of Health

COVID-19 Public Health Emergency Directions

COVID- 19 risk management for Members and Senators required to undertake essential work at Parliament House during their quarantine period in ACT

16 July 2021

This advice has been developed by the Commonwealth Government's Chief Medical Officer.

Dear Member of Parliament or Senator

The Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate, along with Officers of the Department of Health, have worked with the ACT Chief Health Officer to develop guidance to assist you to safely travel to the ACT for the next sitting of the Federal Parliament.

Guidance is based on the most recent version of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency Directions, Federal Parliamentarians Guidance for Entry into the ACT for Essential Parliamentary Business was released on 13 July 2021. This is designed to minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission associated with travel into the ACT from high risk areas. The key feature of this is to quarantine in accordance with ACT guidance in Canberra for two weeks.

Given the stage of the NSW outbreak and the additional risk associated with the highly transmissible Delta variant, any changes from the recommended managed quarantine require additional risk mitigation measures for individuals in exceptional circumstances who are undertaking essential work at Australian Parliament House.

It is important that this advice be followed throughout the quarantine period.

**Prof Paul Kelly
Chief Medical Officer
Department of Health**

18 July 2021

Background

The recent outbreak in New South Wales (NSW) has reached 916 cases and continues to grow demonstrating the impact of the highly transmissible Delta strain.²

Increasing community transmission of the Delta strain of SARS-CoV-2 in NSW means that travel by NSW residents, including Federal Parliamentarians and their essential staff, constitutes a risk of introduction and transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in the ACT.

On 9 July 2021 in response to concern around increasing cases of COVID-19 in New South Wales (NSW) and **The Greater Sydney, Central Coast, Blue Mountains, Wollongong and Shellharbour regions** of NSW have been declared as COVID-19 affected areas.³

The **COVID-19 Areas of Concern Notice**⁴ details all affected regions and additional information around restrictions and requirements for Federal members and staff is provided in ACT Health's COVID-19 Public Health Emergency Directions. Non-residents seeking to enter the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) from a COVID-19 Affected Area must not travel to the ACT, unless an exemption to travel has been granted and if allowed to enter must enter a period of 14 days of quarantine.

Current outbreaks related to the highly transmissible Delta variant are still growing and new data about affected areas continues to emerge. At this stage of this outbreak, the risk of the introduction of COVID-19 to the ACT community and Parliament House related to the entry of multiple parliamentarians and staff for the next sitting, is best mitigated by high quality managed quarantine.

Parliament House at present is at almost full capacity and function. This creates a higher likelihood of a higher impact transmission event. A transmission event could impact the workforce of Australian Parliament House (APH), and potentially impact the function of Government. An outbreak could also adversely affect the broader Canberra community and incur considerable health expense, increase in morbidity and mortality, and potential economic cost related to an outbreak requiring business shut downs. There would be significant negative public perception and reputational impacts. Additional mitigations will be required inside Parliament House to manage the risk associated with travellers from affected areas undertaking essential work during their quarantine period.

Noting the risks it is strongly recommended that travel into the ACT is kept to the absolute minimum and only for essential purposes. Members of Parliament and Senators are exempted to enter the ACT and fulfil their parliamentary duties, supported by the minimum number of essential staff, as essential workers. ACT strongly recommend all those entering the ACT from COVID affected areas complete a 14 day quarantine period within the ACT in accordance with their guidance in ACT Health approved accommodation.

² <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/stats-nsw.aspx>

³ <https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/travel/entering-the-act>

⁴ <https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/travel/entering-the-act>

Noting the significant risk of transmission associated with leaving quarantine to undertake essential work, this would be supported in exceptional circumstances only and with agreement of the individual to comply with the additional mitigations detailed below.

ACT strongly recommend that those from high risk Local Government Areas including **Fairfield, Canterbury-Bankstown, Liverpool, Randwick, Georges River, and Sutherland Shire** do not leave 14 days of managed quarantine.

Travel Exemptions

Exemptions will be considered to enter the ACT for essential parliamentary business during sitting weeks. Staff of Members of Parliament and Senators will be considered for an exemption to provide support during sitting weeks. However staff numbers should be kept to the absolute minimum. Family members are not permitted to travel except in exceptional circumstances.

To enter the ACT for essential parliamentary business outside of sitting weeks, for example to attend critical meetings which cannot be undertaken remotely. ACT Health will provide specific guidance, taking into account individual circumstances, including length of time in the ACT, and potential movement within the ACT. Staff of Members of Parliament and Senators will not be considered for an exemption for this type of travel under the current restrictions.

Process for seeking Entry into the ACT

Anyone who has been in a COVID-19 Area of Concern as declared under a Public Health Direction will be required to follow the specific quarantine or stay at home requirements and travel restrictions. This may require a person to immediately enter self-quarantine or stay at home until a specified date and get tested if they have any COVID-19 symptoms.

Members of Parliament, Senators and essential staff who wish to travel to the ACT from a COVID-19 Area of Concern for the purposes of parliamentary business will need to apply for an exemption prior to entering the ACT, as outlined in this guidance.

Identification of Places of High Concern

- Affected Members of Parliament, Senators and staff must follow the public health advice contained in a COVID-19 Areas of Concern Notice. If identified as a close contact, travel into the ACT will be restricted. Please email APHCovid.Exemptions@act.gov.au for advice.

Watch and Assess period

- During a 'Watch and Assess' period, Members of Parliament, Senators and staff will be required to complete an online declaration form available on the ACT COVID-19 website within 24 hours prior to travel, or within 24 hours of the requirements being enacted (if travellers are already in the ACT).

Stay at Home Direction

- Under 'Stay at Home' requirements, Members of Parliament, Senators and staff will be required to apply for an exemption to travel using the Entry Notification Application Form. Stay at Home requirements will apply, and these will be included in the *Essential Worker Notification Certificate* provided to you, should an exemption be granted.

COVID-19 Affected Area Direction

- Under a 'COVID-19 Affected Area' Direction, Members of Parliament, Senators and staff will be required to apply for an exemption using the Entry Notification Application Form. Quarantine requirements will apply, and these will be included in the *Essential Worker Notification Certificate* provided to you, should an exemption be granted.

Staff Members

Staff of Members of Parliament and Senators will only be considered for an exemption in highly exceptional circumstances, and only where travel is required to provide support during Parliamentary sitting weeks. The number of staff members per office should be kept to the absolute minimum. Stay and Home or Quarantine requirements will apply, when these restrictions are in place.

Staff members should seek an exemption through the online application form that is available on the ACT Government's website: www.covid19.act.gov.au. Applications are required to clearly document the exceptional circumstances requiring essential travel to be undertaken.

Contacts

ACT Health: Vanessa Dal Molin, Executive Branch Manager – COVID-19 Policy and Support
Phone: 5124 9401; Email: APHCovid.Exemptions@act.gov.au
Office of the Chief Health Officer: Phone: 5124 9442

COVID-19 Areas of Concern Core Principles for Travel to the ACT

Core Principles Whilst Undertaking Essential Travel into the ACT

The Core Principles outlined below have been based on those separately applied to other essential workers exempted to enter the ACT (as endorsed by the ACT Chief Health Officer and the Federal Government's Chief Medical Officer). When followed, these Core Principles are intended to minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission, associated with travel into the ACT from areas with community transmission or cluster cases.

Travellers are urged to follow these core principles at all times.

Considerations - Pre-travel (preferably 14 days prior to travel)

- You must first comply with all public health directions in place within the jurisdiction you are currently in, and only travel if permitted to do so.
- Minimise external interactions outside of work and home environments.
- Try to keep travel to private vehicles.
- If any form of public transport is used, then masks should be worn.
- Only undertake essential activities and interactions outside of the home.
- Download the COVIDSAFE app and activate.
- Download the Check in CBR app in preparation for use across the ACT, when you are permitted to access public areas.

Considerations on Day of Travel and During the Journey

1. Travellers who are unwell should not travel.
2. If travellers have any COVID-19 symptoms, no matter how mild, they **must not** enter the ACT.
3. At all times during the journey use appropriate protections including physical distancing, hand and respiratory hygiene and wear a mask.

Testing Requirements for Members of Parliament or Senators undertaking essential work in Parliament House during the 14 day quarantine period.

Testing requirements will be included in the *Essential Worker Notification Certificate* if an exemption is issued. This will be advised directly to individuals.

For those leaving quarantine to undertake essential duties at Parliament House a negative test is required prior to being permitted entry. For this group the following testing requirements apply:

1. an entry test on day 1 of the quarantine period
2. a test on day 5
3. an exit test on day 12 - 13 of the quarantine period
4. daily saliva testing for the entirety of the 14 day quarantine period.

In addition, if Members of Parliament or Senators develop symptoms whilst in the ACT, they should self-isolate immediately and seek testing as a priority.

If symptoms develop whilst in the ACT and testing is required call 02 5124 6209

Core Principles where entry to the workplace is permitted for essential work

These Core Principles apply if permitted travel restrictions are in place (Stay at Home or COVID-19 Affected Area) and an exemption is required for entry.

1. Upon entering the ACT, you must abide by the ACT's public health directions. These can be found at www.covid19.act.gov.au.
2. While in the ACT, you should carefully monitor for any symptoms of COVID-19, such as fever, cough, sore throat or shortness of breath. If you become unwell, even with the mildest of symptoms, you should seek testing through contact with ACT Health and self-isolate until results are received.
3. You should travel only in private vehicles.
4. You should maintain good records of your interactions to facilitate rapid contact tracing, if required.
5. Masks should be worn at all times when out of quarantine accommodation.
6. You will only be able to attend your quarantine accommodation and your place of work. You should not attend any public places, such as cafes or restaurants, gyms, or attend any public events.
7. If permitted to attend work, minimise all activities and interactions and maintain appropriate physical distancing (1.5 metres) and hand hygiene. For all interactions masks should be worn. Ensure all workplace controls are respected and adhered to.

8. Meals should be eaten in private offices or accommodation. There should be no sharing of meals with others.
9. When leaving and returning to your managed quarantine location, pay close attention to hand hygiene, take the stairs wherever possible to avoid touching lift buttons, and don't touch hand railings.
10. If staying in a hotel, you should remain in your room and do not use any shared areas of the hotel (e.g. gyms, cafes or restaurants).
11. Do not receive visitors into your accommodation.
12. If you are diagnosed with COVID-19 within 14 days after leaving the ACT, you must notify ACT Health immediately by calling (02) 5124 6209.
13. Continue to review the official government health website of the jurisdiction you have travelled from for updates to COVID-19 case exposure locations, and if impacted, follow the advice provided. You should also contact ACT Health for advice and assistance by immediately calling (02) 5124 6209.
14. If at any time you become aware of a contact or family member who has become unwell with COVID-19 inform ACT Health and self-quarantine until review.

