PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

6 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000101

Question Subject: First Nations remote communities

Type of Questions: Writing

Senator: Senator Siewert

Question:

What processes will the Department follow if First Nations remote communities ask that travel restrictions under the Biosecurity Act be altered or removed?

Answer:

Remote travel restrictions under the *Biosecurity Act 2015* were established by the Minister for Health, the Hon. Greg Hunt, through the *Biosecurity (Human Biosecurity Emergency) (Human Coronavirus with Pandemic Potential) (Emergency Requirements for Remote Communities) Determination 2020* (the Determination)
The areas contained in the Determination were initially nominated by states and territories, in consultation with communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and organisations.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group on COVID-19 developed a framework (available at: www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/remote-framework-conditions-for-easing-remote-area-travel-restrictions) to help inform decisions around adjusting remote area travel restrictions.

The framework is based on the Pandemic Health Intelligence Plan and has been endorsed by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee and, as announced by the Prime Minister, was agreed at National Cabinet on 15 May 2020. It outlines criteria to ensure risks can be managed appropriately and capability to respond to early cases and outbreaks is in place.

Under this approach, states and territories would be responsible for assessing these criteria, consulting with communities and key partners, and requesting the Commonwealth Minister for Health to make decisions under the *Biosecurity Act 2015* to lift the restrictions.
The Department of Health will provide advice to the Minister based on medical advice and informed by the state and territories' requests, including their capability under the framework.