

# **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:** IQ20-000200

**Question Number:**

**Question Subject:** International cruise ships

**Type of Questions:** Written

**Questioner:** Kristina Keneally

#### **Question:**

1. Per the Explanatory Statement for the Biosecurity (Human Biosecurity Emergency) (Human Coronavirus with Pandemic Potential) (Emergency Requirements) Determination 2020, the Minister was satisfied "that the international cruise ships requirement is necessary to prevent or control the entry, emergence, establishment or spread of a COVID-19 in Australian territory." Further, the Minister was also "satisfied... that the requirement or direction is likely to be effective in, or contribute to, achieving its purpose.... is appropriate and adapted to its purpose". Did CMO Murphy or Secretary Pezzullo provide any advice to the Minister on:
  - a. The specific ships exempted under 5(b) of the Determination?
  - b. The health status of passengers onboard vessels exempted by 5(b) of the Determination?
  - c. The steps they had taken to satisfy themselves that cruise ships returning under 5(b) would not pose a threat to the Australian community?
2. If they did not provide advice on any issue included in 1(a-b), what steps did the Minister then take to satisfy himself that the Determination would not endanger the Australian community?
  - a. Specifically, did the Minister or his staff seek advice from the Department of Agriculture about the health status of passengers onboard vessels exempted by 5(b) of the Determination?
3. Did either CMO Murphy or Secretary Pezzullo provide advice on additional "requirements and directions" that should be considered in order to reduce the risk posed by those ships returning under 5(b)? If so, what was their advice, and why was it not adopted in the Determination?

**Answer:**

**1.** The Determination was put in place to mitigate the emerging risk that cruise ships posed to Australia's COVID-19 response. Acknowledging the need to return Australians home, 5(b) was included to allow ships already under sail at the time of the commencement of the determination, to complete their journey. At this time, individuals returning to Australia were recommended to undertake 14 days self-quarantine on their arrival.

**1a:** The Chief Medical Officer and Secretary Pezzullo did not provide written advice on specific vessels that should be exempt under the Determination.

**1b:** The Chief Medical Officer and Secretary Pezzullo did not provide written advice on the health status of individuals on board vessels exempted by 5(b).

**1c:** The Chief Medical Officer and Secretary Pezzullo did not provide written advice on the steps they had taken to satisfy themselves that individuals arriving under 5(b) would not pose a threat to the community.

**2.** The Minister for Health received advice from the Minister for Home Affairs, Secretary Pezzullo, and the Chief Medical Officer in reaching the position to his satisfaction that the emergency determination was necessary and appropriate for managing the human biosecurity risks presented by incoming cruise vessels.

**2a:** The Health Minister did not receive advice from the Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment on the health status of passengers onboard vessels exempt from the requirements.

**3.** The Chief Medical Officer and Secretary Pezzullo did not provide written advice on additional requirements and directions that should be considered to reduce risk.