

## Resources Sector National COVID-19 Response Protocols

### Supporting guide for engaging with remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Version 1.3

Current as at 21 July 2020

#### Introduction

The minerals industry is proud to engage and partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including Traditional Owners, groups and organisations across Australia. The industry is a responsible partner in working to support and keep remote communities safe during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The industry's approach is based on the shared responsibility to keep people safe from COVID-19, the importance of maintaining active engagement (including remote engagement) and the opportunity to support community-led responses to meet local needs.

#### Scope

The [Resources Sector National COVID-19 Response Protocols](#) supports the industry's commitment to protect and support the minerals workforce, supplier partners and host communities, including remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, during the pandemic.

The protocols reinforce and operate consistent with public health advice and were written in consultation with all peak state and territory representative mining bodies and with the cooperation of the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association.

Mining companies must develop and sustain robust COVID-19 management plans. The plans are based on official advice and designed to adapt with developments of that advice from the nation's public health officials, including the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group on COVID-19](#). The advisory group reports to the [Chief Medical Officer](#) and informs the Communicable Diseases Network Australia and the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee.

The protocols specifically cover engagement with remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (as defined by state and territory governments), which are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 due to existing health inequalities.

All companies must consult regularly with host communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Companies must work to keep communities safe at the same time as providing essential support for those communities.

#### Guidance purpose

This guidance aims to assist implementation of protocols relating to remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It aims to inform rather than prescribe a company's response. Companies should also refer to other published standards and guidance regarding engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

It is a live document updated as the pandemic changes, in line with advice governments, communities, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group on COVID-19 and other stakeholders.

### Structure

This guidance is structured as follows: the relevant protocol is defined followed by a range of supporting actions that may assist to implement protocol (called 'In practice'). Case studies will also be included in future updates.

This guide was updated for the second time on 9 July and 21 July to reflect the lifting of specific public health travel restrictions in some remote areas. Links to new resources were also included.

This follows the 17 April 2020 update to reference the [practical guide](#) to support Resources Sector National COVID-19 Response Protocols implementation.

### Other resources

The MCA, together with state chambers and in consultation with Indigenous organisations, has developed resources to help companies at the corporate and site level. All resources are available at <https://minerals.org.au/communities>.

<b>Minerals industry remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community health response framework</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides suggestions to support health responses across the COVID-19 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Populations Management Plan's four pandemic phases.</li> </ul>
<b>Minerals industry remote Indigenous community response flowchart</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides a step-by-step guide as to how industry can align with the four phases identified in the COVID-19 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Populations Management Plan</li> <li>Tailored for site emergency response plans.</li> </ul>
<b>COVIDSafe: Minerals industry remote communities transition engagement framework</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supports companies to prepare for easing of public health measures enacted to keep remote communities safe</li> <li>Highlights five key considerations relating to health and hygiene protocols and local health systems, vulnerable workers, shared medium-term engagement arrangements, internal business planning and local pandemic response planning.</li> </ul>
<b>Community Engagement Checklist</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assists broader community engagement and may be used to inform planning at a regional level.</li> </ul>

## **Protocol**

Cease non-essential face-to-face activities with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from remote communities while maintaining strong engagement, including support for community-led health planning and local economic activity.

### ***Practice***

- Continuously monitor and comply with public health advice from governments and regulations regarding remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. State, territory, local and Commonwealth public health restrictions may apply
- Defer or find alternate methods of undertaking non-essential face-to-face activities in consultation with relevant stakeholders where practical. The type and nature of essential and non-essential activities will shift over time
- Develop shared medium-term engagement protocols, including specific arrangements for each community or stakeholder group, depending on preferences, risks and businesses. Communicate, monitor and update
- Prioritise engagement via remote/digital means including telephone, email, social media, webinars and other virtual channels
- Continue shared commitments/activities, noting that where delivery of commitments is not practical these should be deferred by mutual agreement with the initiative partner
- Continue stakeholder engagement to support community-led health planning, social resilience and local economic activity as appropriate.

### ***Useful links***

- [COVID19 Safe: Minerals industry remote communities engagement transition framework](#)
- Australian Government Department of Health [COVID-19 website](#)
- Australian Government [Coronavirus \(COVID\) 19 resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and remote communities](#)
- The [Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus Management Plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations](#)

## **Protocol**

Take special care in areas where a workforce is resident near Indigenous communities, including restricting workforce access to certain areas where appropriate. Arrangements are being developed in consultation with governments and remote Indigenous communities.

### ***Practice***

- Monitor and respect public health measures, including travel restrictions
- Engage local disaster management committees and local health systems to confirm local health protection, promotion and management measures, including agreed arrangements to limit transmission risks. This should include evacuation arrangements if cases are identified
- Communicate measures and restrictions in timely, relevant and appropriate ways

### **Protocol**

Continuously communicate health, hygiene and other arrangements to key stakeholders using appropriate channels to prevent community transmission, support local responses and maintain socio-economic resilience.

### **Practice**

- Identify relevant stakeholders, including local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups, councils, organisations, health services, schools and community groups
- Obtain stakeholder feedback about information priorities, preferred communication channels and timing to inform communications planning. These will likely differ between stakeholders and are also likely to evolve over time
- Use existing or establish dedicated channels to communicate accurate, timely and relevant information about the company's pandemic response, including health and hygiene protocols, local support and operational activities. Ensure contact details for questions or feedback are included in all communication
- Ensure all stakeholders are aware of health and hygiene measures in place, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and Indigenous organisations
- Seek to improve communication based on stakeholder feedback, changing circumstances and other factors.

### **Useful links**

- [Community Engagement Checklist](#) developed to support broad community engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Protocol**

Continue essential services provision including health services, electricity and emergency response capability. Strict hygiene protocols are in place for employees undertaking essential services in communities. This includes:

- Training of all staff on hygiene and health protocols for engaging with all visitors, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from remote communities
- Use of personal protective equipment and other measures
- Health education to ensure that employees who are unwell do not attend work.

### **Practice**

- Ensure all workers, suppliers and partners are aware of protocols and monitor compliance
- Develop new processes to eliminate person-to-person contact when delivering essential services, including through physical distancing
- Support partner suppliers and contractors to train staff supporting essential services delivery in hygiene protocols, including supporting development of new processes and equipment
- Consider opportunities to support provision of local housing and infrastructure needs where practical.

### **Useful links**

- The [National Resources Sector Protocol – Supporting Guidance](#) provides practical examples of health and hygiene measures to prevent COVID-19 transmission

- Refer to the [Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus Management Plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations](#).

#### **Protocol**

Support local Indigenous health services providers and governments to undertake awareness activities and implement health, hygiene and preparedness activities:

- Provide support for development and delivery of culturally-appropriate health promotion activities
- Act on opportunities to support preparedness, including providing logistical and transportation assistance and specialist advice where practical
- Local community relations personnel should lead essential engagement with remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

#### **Practice**

- Refer to the [Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus Management Plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations](#)
- Engage local health systems regarding local pandemic response plans, including evacuation arrangements for suspected or diagnosed cases
- Support the delivery of health advisory information in language, including on radio and in person by local health liaison officers where practical
- Engage local health services providers to identify health equipment, essential suppliers and other needs and opportunities to provide support where practical.

#### **Useful links**

- Australian Government [Coronavirus \(COVID\) 19 resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and remote communities](#)
- National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation [health promotion materials](#)
- [Minerals industry remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community health response framework](#).

#### **Protocol**

Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including Traditional Owners, moving between remote communities:

- Progressing arrangements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees returning from sites to remote communities
- This may include arrangements for residents to be tested for COVID-19 as a precautionary measure and providing health, hygiene and other essentials as appropriate
- Working with governments, Indigenous organisations, supplier partners and other organisations to meet local social needs arising from increased populations in remote Indigenous communities.

#### **Practice**

- Consider support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to return to their community, noting public health advice, individual and community aspirations and local arrangements

- This includes the [CDNA National guidelines for public health units](#) and [Management Plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations](#)

Actions may include:

- Testing residents during work periods and prior to returning to communities for COVID-19 as a precautionary measure
  - Isolation and quarantine of people returning to communities if there is a suspected or confirmed case on site
- Consider support available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees wishing to temporarily reside in regional centres where practical
- Engage with local emergency management committees to understand how to support local needs where practical. Local needs are likely to change over time.

**Useful links**

- The [National Resources Sector Protocol – Supporting Guidance](#) provides practical examples of health and hygiene measures to prevent COVID-19 transmission
- Refer to the [Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus Management Plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations.](#)