



**Australian Government**

**Department of Health**

**Chief Medical Officer**

Dear hotel and tourism operators,

As you will be aware, we have updated medical advice regarding the novel coronavirus infection (2019-nCoV).

I am sure that this has caused some concern amongst your industry and I am writing to provide some early advice and guidance.

It is most important to note that the experts still believe this virus is, in the great majority of cases, only passed on to others from people who are unwell with symptoms of infection. There is very limited information to suggest that occasionally people may have spread the virus late in the incubation period in the days before they become unwell or develop an infection without obvious symptoms.

While we are assessing this new data, out of an abundance of caution, we are recommending that well people, who might be incubating the virus, avoid public spaces and isolate themselves in their home or, in the case of tourists, in their hotel rooms. As an added precaution, we are suggesting that this isolation should be for 14 days, although we believe that the average incubation period before symptoms develop is likely to be closer to one week.

This recommendation applies to anyone who has been a close contact with a confirmed case of the virus or has left the Hubei province of China less than 14 days ago. Given that China effectively locked down Hubei province a week ago, most people from there will already have been here a week.

Clearly if you have one of these guests in your property, there will be concerns expressed by the staff. I would like to reassure you and your staff that we still believe that these people are unlikely to be infectious if they are well. If they become unwell, they must seek medical attention, after first phoning ahead to the hospital or doctor to get advice. Staff should avoid contact with any one of these guests who becomes unwell and seek the appropriate medical advice.

Most, if not all, of these guests will be well and, as indicated above, we believe (on current evidence) most unlikely to be infectious. Given our precautionary approach, however, we make the following recommendations for staff in relation to well people during this isolation period:

1. Staff should avoid close contact with these guests but it is safe to be in the same room (at a distance) without protective gear when delivering food, which we recommend that the guests have in their room.
2. Cleaning staff should also avoid close contact. They should wear gloves and use alcohol hand rub before and after wearing gloves. As an added precaution your cleaning staff may wish to wear a surgical mask while cleaning the room.
3. Please reinforce to staff that we believe these people are very unlikely to transmit or develop infection if they have remained well.

Practising good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene is the best defence against most viruses. Please also encourage all staff to:

1. wash their hands often with soap and water before and after eating as well as after attending the toilet
2. avoid contact with others (including touching, kissing, hugging, and other intimate contact)
3. cough and sneeze into their elbow.

If staff become concerned about guests not following health advice, they should contact their state or territory public health authority on the below numbers:

- ACT call 02 5124 9213 during business hours or (02) 9962 4155 after hours
- NSW call 1300 066 055
- NT call 08 8922 8044
- Qld call 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84)
- SA call 1300 232 272
- Tas call 1800 671 738
- Vic call 1300 651 160
- WA visit <https://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/> or call your local [public health unit](#)

The Australian health system is very well prepared to manage a situation such as this and I appreciate your ongoing support and direct contribution to the collective response.

Further information on this emerging situation including a factsheet for the general public or your customers can be found on [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au).

Thank you so much for your help.

Kind regards

Professor Brendan Murphy  
Chief Medical Officer  
30 January 2020