

NIHRACS Media Release 18/04/20

As you are aware several changes occurred yesterday to the level of restrictions on Norfolk. This was aimed mainly at improving the day to day life of Norfolk Islanders within a framework of safety. As has been the aim from day one of the lockdown, any restrictions are planned with the safety of the public as the foremost factor, while being fully cognisant of the mental health and economic issues that stem from those restrictions.

The difference in our message today is that we have identified a positive case of COVID-19 on the island so unfortunately cannot refer to ourselves as "COVID-free".

We know at this stage that at least one person came to Norfolk with the virus some time in March. For obvious reasons the confidentiality of this person is paramount. I can reassure you, that this person does not pose a risk of spread of the virus to anyone now. Due to our strict quarantine and self-isolation rules on Norfolk, we have been able to contain any spread and over the past few weeks have seen no further known cases. This success totally vindicates our decision to lockdown the island on 16 April.

As there is no obvious spread of the virus, we now feel that some restrictions can be lifted while monitoring the effect over the next 2 weeks. Be aware though that any changes to the level of risk, may result in an increase of the restrictions again during this time.

I am therefore appealing to you all to maintain a cautious approach. Try to limit contact with others. Social distancing rules are extremely important. Only shop once a week or less if you can. Shopping once per day increases your risk of infection seven fold. Do not go out or see others if you are unwell. Call the hospital immediately for advice. If you fall into a high risk category for example the elderly or persons with chronic disease, choose to stay home. PM Scott Morrison has advised that restrictions on the mainland will be maintained for at least another 4 weeks in Australia while monitoring the spread of the virus. We will follow a similar cautious approach.

Thank you for all your patience and cooperation during this situation. We will as a community continue to work together to beat this common enemy. Above all please be kind to one another. Getting angry and blaming people is counterproductive and upsetting to others. As I have said before, it is not people limiting your freedom and changing your lifestyle, it is the virus.

Dr Michelle Bonnici
Medical Superintendent
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