



IOT response to COVID-19 coronavirus

The Australian Government is continuing to respond to COVID-19 (Coronavirus), with the health and wellbeing of our communities our first priority.

Locally, the Administrator will continue to work with Australian Government agencies, the Emergency Management executive on Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, the Indian Ocean Territories Health Service, and Western Australian Health, to ensure appropriate local response plans for coronavirus.

Our response to COVID-19 (Coronavirus) is appropriate and necessary with Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands being remote communities and their vulnerability to coronavirus.

The Administrator has declared a state of emergency and a travel ban is in place stopping non-residents from travelling to the islands.

There are limited exemptions only for non-resident personnel required to deliver essential services.

Permission for essential staff to travel is needed from the Administrator of CI and CKI prior to booking.

Residents of CI and CKI are free to travel, however residents returning to CI or CKI are required to self-isolate for 14 days, even if they are returning from the Australian mainland.

Residents affected by self-isolation and quarantine will be supported, including with access to food and essential services.

People should follow health advice from the Australian Government Department of Health and the Indian Ocean Territories Health Service (IOTHS).

We are committed to keeping the community informed as we continue to respond. Regular updates will be provided to the community and stakeholders through official channels.

Community and stakeholders are thanked for their support for and cooperation with the emergency declaration, travel ban and other necessary decisions made in our response to coronavirus.

Everyone is asked to work together and support each other as we navigate this unprecedented situation.

It is understood the impact on coronavirus on the Indian Ocean Territories will be significant – Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands businesses and individuals will have access to a range of measures designed to protect the economy, maintain confidence and keep people in jobs in line with the Australian Government's economic response to COVID-19, including the recently announced \$17.6 billion stimulus package.

Are there any known cases of COVID-19 in the Indian Ocean Territories of Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands??

As at 19 March 2020, no there are no known cases of COVID-19 in the IOT.

Where can I get more health information and advice?

People should follow health advice from the Australian Government [Department of Health](#) and the Indian Ocean Territories Health Service (IOTHS).

Comprehensive public health information is available at <https://www.health.gov.au> or by calling the National Coronavirus Help Line on 1800 020 080. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

What do I do if I get sick on CI or CKI and believe it's coronavirus-related?

If you develop symptoms of respiratory illness (fever, a cough, sore throat, tiredness or shortness of breath) within 14 days of returning to CI or CKI, or within 14 days of last contact of a confirmed case, you should arrange to see the health service for urgent assessment. You should telephone ahead to the Indian Ocean Territories Health Service (IOTHS) before you leave your home or wherever you are self-isolating, and wait to be advised where to go. Tell them your travel history or that you have been in contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus.

- o IOTHS – CHRISTMAS ISLAND - 9164 8333 (24 hours a day)
- o IOTHS – COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS – HOME ISLAND – 9162 7609

- o IOTHS – COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS – WEST ISLAND – 9162 6655

Why has a State of Emergency been declared?

In recognition of the Indian Ocean Territories (IOT) of Christmas Island (CI) and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands (CKI) being remote communities, and their vulnerability to coronavirus, the Administrator Mrs Natasha Griggs, supported by the Emergency Management executive on Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, declared a state of emergency in both territories.

This decision has been made to protect the IOT communities, which currently have no known cases of COVID-19.

What is a State of Emergency?

For further details please see the [*Christmas Island Emergency Management Ordinance 2012*](#) and the [*Cocos \(Keeling\) Islands Emergency Management Ordinance 2012*](#).

How long will the declaration of emergency remain in place?

There is provision under the legislation to allow for extension of the State of Emergency, or to revoke the declaration. The COVID-19 situation will continue to be monitored closely and the community will be kept up to date.

Is there a travel ban in place?

Effective from 18 March 2020, a travel ban is in place in relation to passenger arrivals to CI and CKI. Only residents and essential staff will be able to travel to CI and CKI until further notice, and residents returning to CI or CKI (including from the Australian mainland or travelling in between CI and CKI) will need to self-isolate for 14 days once on their home of CI or CKI.

Why has a travel ban been put in place?

The remote location of the IOT and its limited health facilities, makes our communities more vulnerable to the virus and some people would need to be aeromedically evacuated to the mainland.

Are there exemptions to the travel ban?

There are limited exemptions only for non-resident and resident personnel required to deliver essential services.

Permission for essential staff to travel is needed from the Administrator of CI and CKI prior to booking.

Please contact the Office of the Administrator for further information on essential staff permissions. Contact VARA to manage bookings.

What are the requirements of self isolation?

Anyone travelling to CI or CKI from the mainland, whether they have travelled overseas or remained in Australia, is required to self-isolate for the specified 14-day period on their arrival to Christmas Island or the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

The Administrator will work with the IOT Administration (IOTA), the IOT Health Service (IOTHS) and other stakeholders to support those in self-isolation to access essential services and items as needed.

Please see this [fact sheet](#) for further information and guidelines for self-isolation.

The 14-day self-isolation period is mandatory.

You must remain isolated either in your home, hotel/alternative accommodation or a healthcare setting for a 14- day period and ensure you are symptom-free.

How can I access groceries and medicines while in self isolation?

If you need groceries or medicines (including prescription medicines), ask a family member or friend (who is not in isolation) to deliver them to your home. To prevent infecting other people, make sure you wear a mask when receiving a delivery or have the groceries left at your door.

What if I need help during self isolation?

The Australian Government understands during this time people may require assistance to access food, or other supplies or personal support. The Office of the Administrator will work with you to provide appropriate assistance in facilitating access to these essential items and services.

To request assistance, please contact the Office of the Administrator on 91 64 7959.

Will the Virgin flights to and from the mainland cease?

Virgin Australia Regional Airlines (VARA) has been informed and agencies are working with the airline to manage the new arrangements. VARA flights will continue but only carry passengers who are residents or essential staff.

What about freight?

We are having discussions with VARA, Toll, freight forwarders and local businesses about freight needs.

What about international flights to CI?

Earlier this week, a commercial decision was made to suspend all Malindo Air flights to and from CI. Garuda Indonesia has no flights currently scheduled.

Will this impact the availability of food including fresh fruit and vegetables?

We are having discussions with VARA, Toll, freight forwarders and local businesses about freight needs.

Can I leave CI or CKI?

Yes, however if you return home to CI or CK during the emergency situation, you will be required to self isolate for 14 days, even if you are returning from the Australian mainland or travelling between CI and CKI.

Can I go overseas?

The Australian Government has advised all Australians not to travel at this time. Self-isolation is required on return. For the latest travel advice visit [Smartraveller](#)

Will I be required to self isolate if I am travelling within the Indian Ocean Territories, for example from Christmas Island to Cocos (Keeling) Islands or vice versa?

Yes – we recommend limiting all travel.

If one person from a family has travelled overseas (e.g. people who have just returned from Malaysia) and they share a household with other family members (who didn't travel), do ALL family members need to be self-isolated?

Please see this [fact sheet](#) for further information and guidelines for self-isolation.

Do I have to self-isolate if I travel to mainland Australia from Christmas Island or the Cocos (Keeling) Islands?

There is currently no requirement to self-isolate on mainland Australia when you arrive from Christmas Island or the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, although this may change. If you are a Christmas Island or the Cocos (Keeling) Islands resident wishing to return to Christmas Island or the Cocos (Keeling) Islands during the travel ban, you will need to self-isolate for 14 days from your date of arrival to Christmas Island or the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

What happens if I am trying to get home to Christmas Island or the Cocos (Keeling) Islands and I have been overseas (outside of Australia)?

When you arrive in Australia from your overseas destination you will need to self-isolate while in Australia while you await your flight to Christmas Island or the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. Once you arrive on Christmas Island or the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, you will then begin your Christmas Island or the Cocos (Keeling) Islands 14 day self-isolation requirements.

Are there penalties if I do not self-isolate on Christmas Island or the Cocos (Keeling) Islands?

Yes, penalties and enforceable containment/custody may be imposed on you if you do not comply with this requirement. It is important to comply with the self-isolation requirements to protect the Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands communities. The Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands police will be proactively monitoring compliance with self isolation.

What will be done to address any economic impacts of this travel ban or coronavirus impacts in general?

The impact on the community will be significant, and businesses and individuals on CI and CKI will have access to a range of measures designed to protect the economy, maintain confidence and keep people in jobs in line with the Australian Government's economic response to COVID-19, including the recently announced \$17.6 billion stimulus package.

Who qualifies as a resident?

Anyone who is currently residing on Christmas Island or Cocos (Keeling) Islands is considered a resident. For questions about the status of a resident, please contact the Office of the Administrator.

Important Contact Details:

- Indian Ocean Territories Health Service (IOTHS)
 - IOTHS – CHRISTMAS ISLAND - 9164 8333 (24 hours a day)
 - IOTHS – COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS – HOME ISLAND – 9162 7609
 - IOTHS – COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS – WEST ISLAND – 9162 6655
- EMERGENCY 000 (24 hours a day)
- Office of the Administrator
Email: Natasha.Griggs@infrastructure.gov.au
Phone (Business Hours): 9164 7959
Phone (Out of Hours): AFP CI 9164 8444; AFP CKI 9162 6600, or dial 000

More Information

- For the latest advice, information and resources, go to www.health.gov.au
- Call the National Coronavirus Help Line on 1800 020 080. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Administrator's announcements:
https://www.regional.gov.au/territories/indian_ocean/iot_bulletins/2020/index.aspx
- Administrator's Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/NGriggsIOT/>

19 March 2020