



CHIEF MINISTER

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The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister of Australia
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister

Scott

The Centre for National Resilience at Howard Springs has delivered a best practice model for quarantining Australians, including vulnerable Australians, and in doing so has demonstrated a level of cooperation between our governments which is unparalleled. Together we continue to fight the COVID-19 pandemic whilst bolstering our domestic capabilities to aid in the post-pandemic economic and social recovery.

In light of the Centre's continuing success, I am writing to seek your interest in fully maximising the capacity of the Centre, as well as the number of international air passengers into Australia, in order to progress our joint industry development aspirations.

I understand that the number of passengers arriving on repatriation flights into Darwin is consistently falling below the level of agreed seats per flight, with an average under-utilisation of approximately 25 per cent over the last six weeks. This has meant a shortfall of 528 expected arrivals at the Centre over this period, creating significant space in the facility through unmet demand. Given the upcoming European summer period, and increasing vaccination coverage overseas, it is expected the rate of demand for repatriation flights will continue to decline.

I am also aware that the Defence-managed Bladin Point facility is operating under capacity, with around 200 additional places available.

On this basis, I am seeking to explore your interest in redirecting capacity in these under-utilised facilities to accommodate domestic industry priorities, including seasonal workers and international students, utilising current management structures. My government stands ready to work with the relevant Commonwealth officials to coordinate priority seasonal worker source countries and restore international student markets, building from the base of our successful pilots in both sectors.

I look forward to continuing to build on our joint success of the Centre for National Resilience to maximise international market opportunities, in order to bounce back even better from the COVID-19 economic hit.

Yours sincerely

MICHAEL GUNNER

- 1 JUN 2021



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The Hon Scott Morrison MP
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Dear Prime Minister

I am writing to progress the shared opportunity which we discussed last week, aimed at ensuring the continuing competitiveness and viability of Australian industry.

The Northern Territory, through the Centre for National Resilience at Howard Springs, has demonstrated outstanding leadership as part of the national COVID-19 response in keeping our fellow Australians safe, whilst returning vulnerable Australians home.

Following the success of the Northern Territory in leading the national repatriation effort, I would like to further explore a joint arrangement with the Commonwealth to utilise the Northern Territory's second quarantine facility – the Alice Springs Quarantine Facility – to effectively and safely quarantine seasonal workers and/or across priority industry groups.

The facility can safely accommodate around 100 workers per fortnight from jointly agreed countries of origin under the Northern Territory's proven emergency management framework and clinical model of care.

As proposed, the facility would operate on a partial cost recovery basis, with industry funding the costs of charter flights and the employer funding the quarantine fee, as has occurred with the earlier Seasonal Worker pilots.

In order to operationalise the Alice Springs Quarantine Facility for seasonal workers, the Northern Territory is seeking the Commonwealth's commitment to work together on a joint arrangement, with the Commonwealth providing additional capacity to improve the processing of international arrivals. This would include a contingency of Border Force staff at the Alice Springs Airport; and streamlined visa processing for seasonal workers, to improve the current delays which employers are facing in accessing seasonal workers from overseas markets.

I look forward to your consideration of this matter, and reiterate the Territory's shared commitment towards Australia's economic recovery in a safe and proportionate manner which adequately responds to industry needs.

Yours sincerely

MICHAEL GUNNER - 7 MAY 2021

cc. The Hon Christian Porter MP
Minister for Industry, Science and Technology

The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented labour shortage which will have severe economic repercussions on the Australian economy if it is not swiftly addressed. As you are aware, workforce shortages are already threatening the viability many sectors of our economy, especially hospitality, education and agriculture.

NT Farmers Association proposes utilizing the fit for purpose Bladin Point worker facility to quarantine international workers and students arriving in Australia to support our industries. The facility, is less than one hour from Darwin International Airport and is currently being successfully used to quarantine members of the Australian Defense Force. The worker facility is owned by John 'Foxy' Robinson, it is currently leased until the 15th of June.

The facility can accommodate significant numbers of guests and staff each 14 day quarantine period. Quarantine operations at Bladin Point will greatly assist to alleviate the significant student and workforce shortages being experienced by industry. Standing up the operation will require commitment from industry and all layers of government around Australia.

National hospitality, aged care, health, education and agricultural sectors will all benefit immensely from the facility. The facility will be used by industry from all states and Territories, with respective governments financially contributing to operations. This quarantine centre will play a vital role in supporting the workforce needs of Australian businesses.

The facility at Bladin Point presents the Australian government with an opportunity to alleviate its crippling student and workforce shortage. If a successful quarantine arrangement for the agricultural workforce is not found, the country will face a food security threat and potential food shortages.

The agricultural industry needs certainty that it can access a reliable pool of harvest workers, the industry alone is facing a forecast shortage of 20,000 workers. Without additional workers, farmers will be forced to let produce go to waste on their fields.

It is essential that your government and industry work together to swiftly secure the vital quarantine facility. The current lease ends on the 15th of June, we must immediately start working to secure the facility for the benefit of farms and businesses around Australia.

Your government's support of the facility will not only deliver a workforce to industry but it will strengthen the Australian economy. Businesses around Australia are relying on your Government to find a solution to the critical worker shortage.

NT Farmers Association urge you to support our proposal to open the Bladin Point facility as a quarantine center for industry across Australia. Your leadership on this issue will help to guarantee food security in Australia and economic growth for our economy.

If you would like further information about the proposal, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Paul Burke', with a stylized, flowing script.

Paul Burke
CEO NT Farmers.

12 May 2021

Mr Alex Caroly
Senior Advisor
Prime Minister and Cabinet
Parliament House
PO Box 6022
Canberra ACT 2600
(Via email: Alex.Caroly@pm.gov.au)

Dear Mr Caroly,

Congratulations to the Morrison Government on developing and delivering such a positive 2021 - 2022 Budget which will ensure Australia's financial security and prosperity following the global devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In particular, and to assist the Morrison Government safely re-open international borders in a controlled and phased approach, we have taken the time to document practical options for consideration with respect to large-scale Quarantine facility options.

Please refer to the below Executive Summary for an overview of the Concept Paper and proposed options. The comprehensive Concept Paper is attached along with accompanying Appendices and supporting evidence for further details.

We welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss and explore the options described within the Concept Paper.

Sincerely,

Mr Glenn Keys AO
Founder and Executive Chair
Aspen Medical

Executive Summary

Background

As an Australian and veteran-owned company, employing more than 4,000 staff in Australia and around the world, we are committed to supporting the Morrison Government and the broader community with a range of health services. Aspen Medical supports multiple Commonwealth Departments, including the Department of Health (DoH), Home Affairs, the Australian Border Force (ABF), Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Australian Federal Police (AFP) and the Australian Defence Force (ADF).

Aspen Medical has significant, recent and highly relevant experience supporting a range of COVID-19 related health programs in Australia, across the Pacific region and around the world. This includes the provision of Quarantine health services, deploying clinical personnel and support services to a number of facilities.

Introduction and challenges

The quarantine of returning Australian citizens and international travellers has historically been the responsibility of State and Territory Governments. This has produced a system in which COVID-19 has been largely contained with limited infections and deaths, however the effectiveness of quarantine services and volume of returning citizens varies significantly by State/Territory.

Based on recent localised outbreaks, including some limited community transmission in Sydney and Melbourne as result of suspected breaches of quarantine infection prevention and control protocols, there is a growing call to review and enhance the current quarantine arrangements.

Most quarantine facilities are near city or suburban areas with support staff working with the quarantine facilities mixing within the local community in which they live and work. In the event of infection, the personnel are likely to unknowingly transmit the virus within their local community.

Additionally, as international borders re-open in a phased and controlled approach over time, there will be a need to increase quarantine capacity to cater for larger cohorts of returning citizens, including those returning from higher risk locations such as India or the USA.

Concept Paper Solutions

The Concept Paper proposes that several large-scale and currently unused or underutilised suitable accommodation facilities identified and located in semi-regional locations in Darwin, NT that could be rapidly established as dedicated quarantine facilities to cater for returning Australian citizens or other approved cohorts such as seasonal workers and/or university students.

Potential facilities and sites have been identified, scoped and mapped for consideration by the Commonwealth. Several of the facilities identified within the Concept document were previously utilised to accommodate illegal arrivals while their respective visa applications were assessed by the Department of Home Affairs and Department of Immigration.

A Number of the facilities contain not only suitable accommodation, but also have capabilities to run a clinic and/or provide Hospital style facilities which could be rapidly upgraded to cater for COVID-19 positive patients. One concept would be to utilise these facilities and engage the services of private health partner such as Aspen Medical to manage discreet cohorts of international arrivals. In doing so, this would reduce and remove the burden on the NT Government to accommodate and treat COVID-19 positive patients whilst recovering in quarantine and reducing risk the broader community.

Recommendations

Aspen Medical recommends that the Commonwealth engages in a co-design process which would include a detailed scoping assessment of the facilities identified in the Concept Paper with the view to quickly move to the establishment of at least one new dedicated quarantine facility in a controlled and Phased approach. The initial facility would likely be the accommodation site previously utilised by Home Affairs as a visa processing centre at Bladin Point, Darwin, NT. This facility can safely accommodate 1,500 returning passengers and support staff co-located onsite, thus removing the risk of community transmission.

Once the initial Quarantine facility is established, additional quarantine sites can be implemented in a phased approach allowing additional volume of returning citizens and other approved cohorts to safely quarantine in Darwin for the agreed timeframe before being cleared to transfer to their ultimate domestic destination.