

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
To: s 22(1)(a)
Cc: Chan, Michelle; s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: Talking points on China coronavirus [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]
Date: Monday, 20 January 2020 4:54:24 PM
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Hi s 22(1)(a) – as you may be aware, this morning the Prime Minister was asked about the Australian Government's response to the novel coronavirus in Wuhan, China (transcript below with section highlighted).

The Chief Medical Officer published a media release last night (<https://www.health.gov.au/news/novel-coronavirus>) and is expected to publish a further statement tomorrow. We have worked with Health and DFAT to draft the below talking points in the event they are required. We'll update you tomorrow if the CMO's advice changes.

Talking points

- The Department of Health is closely monitoring the novel coronavirus situation but there is no cause for alarm in Australia.
 - We have established and evidence based mechanisms to respond to ill travellers at points of entry.
 - This includes a requirement for airlines to report passengers showing signs of an infectious disease. Biosecurity officers then make an assessment and take necessary actions, such as isolation and referral to hospital where required.
 - The World Health Organization position does not currently recommend additional measures at airports beyond our established mechanisms.
 - The Chief Medical Officer is meeting with state and territory counterparts today and the United States' Center for Disease Control and Prevention tomorrow morning.
 - The Chief Medical Officer will issue a statement tomorrow to provide an update on developments after these key meetings and discussions.
 - If it becomes necessary, we have processes in place to enhance our border measures in relation to communicable diseases.
 - The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade keeps all travel advisories under close review. The Australian Embassy in Beijing and our mission in Shanghai are closely monitoring the situation in China.
- #### Background
- On 31 December 2019, a cluster of pneumonia of unknown cause was reported in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China. A novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) was identified as the cause by Chinese authorities on 7 January 2020, by genetic sequencing.
 - The source of the outbreak is still under investigation, with the outbreak in Wuhan, China initially linked to a large seafood and animal market. However as some of the cases did not report visiting this market, further investigations are required to determine how these cases were infected and the potential of human-to-human transmission.
 - The number of reported cases has increased in recent days, in part as a result of increased testing.

Let me know if you need anything further.

Cheers
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[Title: Reconciliation branding and acknowledgment: The Department acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connections to the land, waters and community. We pay respect to their Cultures, Country and Elders both past and present. - Description: Reconciliation branding and acknowledgment: The Department acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connections to the land, waters and community. We pay respect to their Cultures, Country and Elders both past and present.]

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From: PMO - Media <PMOMedia@pm.gov.au<<mailto:PMOMedia@pm.gov.au>>>

Sent: Monday, 20 January 2020 10:31 AM

Subject: Prime Minister - Transcript - Interview with Neil Mitchell, 3AW - Monday 20 January 2020

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The Hon. Scott Morrison MP

Prime Minister

TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH NEIL MITCHELL, 3AW

MONDAY 20 JANUARY 2020

EO&E...

NEIL MITCHELL: ...Prime Minister, have you got any estimate of what this will cost?

PRIME MINISTER: Look, it will be hundreds of millions, we expect. But it's an open-ended demand driven program. It'll go to everyone who needs it. And that's both the grants, of course, and the loans. The loans are incredibly important because that gives you two years, no payments, the principal, doesn't expand. That of itself, if you took half a million dollars out in the loan is worth more than \$100,000 in the saved interest payments to get your business back and operating.

MITCHELL: So you're really willing to pay what it costs?

PRIME MINISTER: Of course we are, because in these communities, and we learned this when we responded to the flood crisis in north Queensland. What you had to do is get those grants in early and we put those \$75,000 grants into those agricultural producers, the farmers. We've done the same here in the face of this bushfire crisis. And what we're doing now is the support for small businesses. In so many of these affected towns, whether it's down there in south east Victoria or the New South Wales coast, all the way up even to the north coast. So many of these tourism businesses in particular, and they're going to have real cash flow problems. And I think this really addresses their working capital needs.

MITCHELL: I see the problem but on your figures, it's about 192,000 businesses. The small business associations says about 300,000 businesses. But even as you take yours and give him an average 20 grand, it's nudging four billion dollars.

PRIME MINISTER: No, it won't be anything like that. And the eligibility for the grants is for people whose businesses have been directly impacted by the bushfires.

MITCHELL: But that's 190,000.

PRIME MINISTER: It's not income loss and the degree of impact we will see. But we've set aside, as you know, \$2 billion in the recovery fund. Our estimates are well shy of that. But, you know, it's in the hundreds of millions, we expect, and that's why we established the recovery fund to do just that. There are already \$15,000 grants that were available that we were joint funding with the state governments and we are funding the full extra amount up to the \$50,000 as part of our recovery fund initiative.

MITCHELL: Are you willing to go into billions if necessary?

PRIME MINISTER: Look, at this stage that is not what the projections are, Neil. And that's also not been what the experience is. I mean, when we did these in north Queensland, the average grant that was done on the \$75,000 was about \$55,000. And so once you do the proper assessments and you sit down with people and you work through their plans, it's a combination of grants and it's a combination of loans. The other thing we've done today is given relief around people's BAS. That doesn't have to be done till May at the earliest. And for those who do Pay As You Go income tax, the last payment that they would have made, they can claim that back, which will support their cashflow. For those who have done that, they'll have a zero assessment from December, which means we're just trying to take all the pressure off anything on the immediate cashflow.

MITCHELL: Ok, I'm not arguing that. So who check out the applications?

PRIME MINISTER: The state governments, they run these programs for us, we pay the bill. And they have the people on the ground through their financial assessment teams that traditionally provide all of this support. So they'll be working that through. And we've already had those discussions with them and they're already running the programs for the grants for the \$15,000. So this is an extension of that. So that's how this is done and we support them fully in that and we will work closely with them to get it out as quickly as possible.

MITCHELL: What will you have to prove to get a grant?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, on the grant, you've got to have impact to your business, like the actual physical damage to your business.

MITCHELL: Oh, physical damage, so it's not just a lost business.

PRIME MINISTER: That's right. You've got to have physical damage. The loans, though, are broader. So you just need to be in one of these bushfire affected areas to get access to the zero interest loans. And that really deals with those businesses who know they have got a successful business model when events return to more normal conditions and they need to get through this next year and the year after that. And this gives them the breathing space to be able to do that. These types of loans do exactly what the industry was asking for last week. Peter Strong, who runs the Council of Small Business, said he was expecting grants of \$20,000 and so \$50,000 is well beyond their expectation. And I think it's just an indication of just how fair dinkum we are about this.

MITCHELL: Farmers are small businesses or are they eligible?

PRIME MINISTER: They get \$75,000, farmers. We announced that last week. They have broader capital needs, everything from pumps and dams and solar panels and sheds and tractors and all of these things, their fences in particular. Those grants are also important for these local communities because the rebuilding a lot of the agricultural properties and remembering on the south coast in New South Wales, you've got a lot of oyster leases and things like that. So it's just not, you know, graziers and farmers. It's primary producers in a whole range of different areas.

MITCHELL: How long is it going to take to recover from this?

PRIME MINISTER: I think it'll take a decade. I mean, that's what happened after Black Saturday. And, you know, it will get a long way in the next few years. But this is a long haul process. And that's, well, I pulled together around 30 peak organisations from charities, wildlife, business, tourism, unions last week. And that was our commitment as a group that this is not something that's going to happen just for six months and everyone moves on to something else. This is a long term rebuilding. We've got to build it back better.

MITCHELL: Some in the community are starting to feel a bit isolated. This happened after Black Saturday as well. Can you get boots, can you get people out talking to them?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, I think this has been one of the great successes of getting the defence forces involved. Prior to our decision to take the initiative and do the call out and so we were no longer responding to requests, we were responding on our own initiative. We went from less than 900 Defence Force personnel to 6,500 in a matter of weeks. And getting those people on the ground has been enormously helpful, not just for morale, but for the practical things that need to be done. The Defence Forces are doing amazing work connecting a lot of those very isolated communities in East Gippsland and either doing medical evacuations, dropping supplies, getting sat phones in, dropping fuel, doing fodder drops to remote farms. They have together with, you know, obviously the volunteer firefighters and the professional firefighters in where there's many more in Victoria that they have just done an extraordinary job.

MITCHELL: Labor's talking about zero carbon emissions by 2050. Will you match that?

PRIME MINISTER: I have no idea what the Labor Party is talking about.

MITCHELL: What will you do?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, we've got 26 percent reduction in emissions by 2030, which is our Paris commitment.

MITCHELL: Are you going to expand that?

PRIME MINISTER: We're going to meet and beat our targets and I'm going to follow the policy that I took to the last election, which is to keep reducing emissions, but not put a tax on people, not put up their electricity prices.

MITCHELL: Is 2050... By 2050, is zero emissions achievable?

PRIME MINISTER: We undertook to look at that through the Pacific Islands Forum in the commitment I gave last year. But we need to understand what that means. And the people can say that. But what does that mean for jobs? I can't answer that question right now about what that would mean for jobs. But I'm concerned that it wouldn't be a good thing and so I think people who make these commitments need to be able to tell people what that will cost them.

MITCHELL: Prime Minister, on something else, the sports grant debate. The Auditor has found, well, massive pork barrelling, but blatant pork barrelling. Did you sign off on it?

PRIME MINISTER: The Cabinet signed off, obviously, on the program and which is a \$100 million to go to community sports and regional grants.

MITCHELL: What about the individual grants?

PRIME MINISTER: That was done by the Minister.

MITCHELL: So nobody else was consulted?

PRIME MINISTER: The Minister and Sports Australia. Because Sports Australia write the cheque and ultimately authorise all the payments that go out in accordance with the rules, which is what the Auditor-General found was followed. The Auditor-General found that there were no ineligible projects, which was different to what happened with Ros Kelly and Catherine King. They had money going to projects that simply were ineligible.

MITCHELL: Was Liberal Party head office consulted, or any campaign strategist consulted?

PRIME MINISTER: The Minister made the decisions and got all the representation from everybody. I mean, that's the thing about grants.

MITCHELL: But it looks political. It looks political. Was there any advice taken from campaign strategists or Liberal Party head office?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, not that I can speak of. What I'm saying is that the grant programs, you know, people in communities want grants for their local sports projects and they lobby for them and they do that

through their local members. They do it in direct petitions to the Prime Minister.

MITCHELL: So you stand by her unequivocally.

PRIME MINISTER: I continue to support her. And the reason I do is because she was delivering a program that has changed the futures of local communities. I mean, what we're talking about here...

MITCHELL: Nobody argues that, it's whether it's done on a political basis and that the Auditor seems to be saying it is.

PRIME MINISTER: Well, it's hard to say, to draw that absolute conclusion when the Minister intervened to make sure more Labor seats got funding.

MITCHELL: Were they winnable seats?

PRIME MINISTER: I don't have lists but one of them was Anthony Albanese's seat. I think he was pretty confident of holding his seat of Grayndler.

MITCHELL: So she'll hold on to a job, no question?

PRIME MINISTER: I continue to support her.

MITCHELL: What does that mean? Long term?

PRIME MINISTER: I continue to support her, Neil. It's a pretty direct answer to a pretty direct question.

MITCHELL: Class action threatened by Slater and Gordon. We were aware of that?

PRIME MINISTER: Lawyers are going to try and take opportunity from things. I mean, that's fairly predictable.

MITCHELL: Prime Minister, just finally, you started off the year in a political sense not all that well. There was criticism and we saw that at several levels. I think... have you learnt anything about being a better Prime Minister in this period?

PRIME MINISTER: I've just been focused, Neil, on the people that need help. I mean, there's been lots of commentary about me and lots of stuff on social media and news agencies reporting social media as if it's truth. I don't... that's not my focus. I mean, my focus is just getting help to people who need it right now in the bushfires. That's it. It's not about me. It's about the pain and the difficulties they're having and those small businesses that need to rebuild. We've been working on this package over the last week, working with industry, the \$76 million we've put into the tourism industry campaign is also going to help those businesses. I just want to help them get on their feet as best as we can. We can't make it like the day it was before the bushfire. We can't do that.

MITCHELL: Well, I'm sure you're aware they are calling you Scotty from marketing. Is that insulting?

PRIME MINISTER: That's what the Labor Party is saying and if others want to repeat those slogans, well, they're just basically running a Labor Party campaign.

MITCHELL: Is it an insult?

PRIME MINISTER: Oh, look, I don't care really, Neil. I mean, the Labor Party are going to make snarky comments. They're going to seek to take political advantage of a crisis. I think that's disappointing. I'm just focused on what people need. I'll leave the politics and the commentary and the hoopla to others.

MITCHELL: Yeah, but I mean, you said you shouldn't have gone to Hawaii. That was a mistake. So have you learnt anything?

PRIME MINISTER: Yeah, I was pretty candid about that, Neil.

MITCHELL: But have you learnt anything about it?

PRIME MINISTER: Yeah, I wouldn't have done that again.

MITCHELL: Ok. One other thing. Just quickly, the China illness surfacing in China. Are we looking at screening at airports? They are in the United States.

PRIME MINISTER: This is this is a pretty new report and we are looking at these things closely and we've got some established procedures for how we make those judgments and you can be assured that we're doing everything that we should be doing to protect people's health and safety.

MITCHELL: I really appreciate your time. Thank you very much.

PRIME MINISTER: Thanks a lot, Neil.

[END]

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Press Office of the Hon. Scott Morrison MP, Prime Minister, Canberra

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Australian Government

Department of Health
National Incident Room

Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

WoG Talking Points

Date of Issue	2020-01-26 0630 AEDT	Version	6
Reference	NIR #2238	Next Report	2020-01-26 1700 hrs AEDT
Prepared By	NIR Public Information Manager	Authorised By	Celia Street, FAS OHP
Context	<p>This report focuses on the health portfolio. States and territories have constitutional authority for health responses. The NIR supports national coordination of health sector emergencies under the <u>Australian Health Protection Principal Committee</u> but may also coordinate internal <u>Department of Health</u> activities during complex incidents.</p> <p>Changes are shown in red italics.</p>		
Distribution	PMO, Minister Hunt, PM&C, DFAT, DA, DHA, Health Exec, CMO, OHPD, IHD		

1. Talking Points


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International Situation

- On 7 January 2020, Chinese authorities identified a new type of coronavirus, 2019-CoV, belonging to the same virus family as SARS and MERS.

- Cases were initially linked to a seafood market in Wuhan, China; the majority of cases have been in Wuhan.
- Chinese health authorities are undertaking intensive investigation to fully understand the virus, the source of the virus, how it spreads and how it effects humans.

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2. Background

Epidemiology

- Coronaviruses are ubiquitous—there are many known viruses in humans and animals including some viruses that cause the common cold.
- This novel virus was first detected in the City of Wuhan in China around 30 December 2019.

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Australian Government

Department of Health
National Incident Room

Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

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Context	Changes are shown in <i>red italics</i> .		
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