

# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group on COVID-19, 12 March 2020

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The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group on COVID-19 (the taskforce) met for the third time on Thursday 12 March 2020.

The taskforce discussed components of the recently announced [\\$2.4 billion health package](#) to protect all Australians from COVID-19. Key components include:

- Increasing the capacity of the National Medical Stockpile in deploying personal protective equipment (PPE); and
- Primary health care measures including; telehealth services, pathology testing support and the establishment of respiratory health clinics.

The taskforce discussed options for the distribution of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific allocations including; support for remote and very remote communities to minimise the likelihood of exposure to COVID-19, increase their capacity to evacuate early cases, and enable an effective response if an outbreak occurs.

Members will provide specific advice on potential locations for respiratory clinics and ensuring that these are accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The taskforce provided practical examples of where communication and response mechanisms may need to be flexible and adaptable to community contexts, for example phoning ahead may not be feasible in remote communities.

The group continues to develop the *Management Plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations*, to feed into the *Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)*.

Co-chaired by the Department of Health and the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), the taskforce includes Public Health Medical Officers and leaders from the Aboriginal Community Controlled Sector, Aboriginal Health Services, state and territory government public health and medical officials, Aboriginal communicable disease experts, the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association and the National Indigenous Australians Agency.

The taskforce will next meet on Tuesday 17 March 2020.