



Keeping remote Indigenous communities safe

Update 2 – 15 April 2020

Context

This bulletin provides an update on actions by the minerals industry to support and protect remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

It also outlines how the industry is supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers that may be at greater risk than the general population.

Meeting biosecurity, travel and local requirements

As detailed in Update 1, the minerals industry is complying with all biosecurity, travel and other requirements and other health advice. This includes Commonwealth, state and Northern Territory and local government requirements and arrangements by land councils and Traditional Owner groups.

The industry also continues to implement the National Resources Sector COVID-19 Protocols which establish core obligations to keep workers, families and communities safe. The protocols include specific obligations to consult, protect and support remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Recent priorities and actions

1. Supporting host remote communities to meet increased health, social, and other needs

Providing practical support to assist host communities to meet increased housing, goods, infrastructure and other needs is an ongoing industry priority.

Companies generally work directly with existing partner Traditional Owner and Indigenous organisations, local pandemic response committees and other groups. In some areas industry organisations and companies are also coordinating with government agencies on regional solutions.

The type of practical support provided varies based on local needs and availability. For example:

- Rio Tinto's Gove Operations providing significant in-kind support and engagement of local contractors in Nhulunbuy so a facility can be used as a distribution centre for essential supplies to Indigenous communities and homelands
- FMG supplying more than 1,000 care packages in the Pilbara
- Newcrest assisting with fruit and vegetables supplies in host Pilbara communities
- Glencore supporting health promotion and provision of hygiene products in Aurukun.

This practical support adds to major company contributions to organisations such as the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

To assist in responding to the high volume of requests, requests from other communities and organisations are shared with industry partners and government agencies that may be able to meet these needs.

The MCA will include key contributions on its [Communities](#) COVID-19 webpage.



2. Engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers at higher risk

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and contractors make an immense and valued contribution to the industry. Keeping our workforce safe is always the industry's first priority.

Companies are engaging directly with their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees regarding the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee's [recommendations for managing workers that may be at higher risk](#) (30 March 2020). The committee identifies Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over 50 years old with one or more chronic medical conditions as being at higher risk if exposed to COVID-19.

Conversations are held in confidence, respecting the dignity, health, wellbeing and privacy of employees. Arrangements will be made in consultation with employees assessed as at higher risk.

Approaches will be revised in line with official health advice.

3. Supporting other sectors

In line with its commitment to keep workers, families and communities safe, the MCA has offered to make safety, health, community and other tools, guidelines and checklists available to other sectors.

Resources are also available on the MCA [website](#)

Other measures

These actions are in addition to ongoing measures by industry to:

- Implement and enforce COVID-19 protocols where workforces are near Indigenous communities in consultation with those communities
- Limit or eliminate face-to-face contact with remote communities where companies deliver essential goods or services (such as goods transportation) in consultation with those communities
- Defer non-essential travel and change workforce arrangements to reduce essential travel associated with operations
- Support information-sharing, coordination and best practice through the MCA.

Next steps

The minerals industry will continue to work collaboratively to understand how it can provide further support for Indigenous communities.

As always, its approach will be informed by listening to and engaging with host communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health organisations, social services providers, governments and other stakeholders.