



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

25 March 2020



Message from Senator the Hon Marise Payne

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Minister for Women

The COVID-19 pandemic is the gravest crisis most Australians will have seen in their lifetimes. The impact on many of our fellow citizens is deeply distressing.

Unprecedented numbers of Australians are trying to return to Australia. If you are amongst them, we know it is a difficult time. The Government and my department are working to support you.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is working around the clock to find options to bring particularly vulnerable Australians home, including those from isolated locations. We are working directly with airlines and travel companies to identify options. Our ability to assist is also constrained by rapidly changing country regulations on borders and movement in a number of countries, and flight availability.

There are many hundreds of thousands of Australians overseas. We will not be able to bring everyone home. The Government's advice is as follows:

- Where there are still some commercial options available to return to Australia, take them even if they do not represent your first preference.
- Where commercial options are no longer available, you may need to prepare to stay in your current location until restrictions are lifted. Find a safe location, stay in contact with family and friends and follow the advice of your Australian diplomatic missions and local authorities.

As many countries are no longer accepting cruise ships, we are also focused on identifying ports for cruise ships carrying Australians to dock and disembark their passengers, and to assist them to return to Australia. We are working with cruise lines and bilateral partners to identify ports.

For those of you who may be overseas in coming weeks, Australia's diplomatic missions around the globe will do whatever they can to provide you with regular advice and support. This will include information on local restrictions, food and necessities, and other support. Please ensure you sign up to their social media accounts, as well as Smartraveller.

This is a difficult time, with new challenges arising daily. The Australian Government is here to support you.