

Michael Gunner
Chief Minister of the Northern Territory



Media Statement

Statement from the Chief Minister

30 March 2020

We've just come out of a weekend in the Territory that was unlike any weekend before it.

For me, every Saturday normally starts at the Parap Markets, and there was no queues at Mary's this Saturday. That didn't happen.

The world is a very different place now. It's changed for all of us. And it's going to be different for a while.

But if we keep working together to stay safe and save lives, we can get the Territory back to what we all love.

By now you're all aware of the Prime Minister's announcements after National Cabinet last night.

There will be another National Cabinet meeting tonight.

I know it seems like every day the list of restrictions gets a bit longer, and trying to live a normal life gets a bit tougher.

But what's happening is not normal. We can't act as though things are normal.

If you can't keep up with all the different rules, I don't blame you at all.

So, just remember five words: *Stay home, if you can.*

Unless you've got to work, or shop, or exercise – *stay home, if you can.*

I know it seems like the most un-Territorian thing to do – to stay inside, shut away from the great outdoors. But being the best Territorian you can be right now means being safe.

Think of it this way. When you're out in public, around a lot of other people, you are rolling the dice with your health, and your family's health.

So, instead of rolling the dice, choose the safest bet – *stay home, if you can.*

I think last week was when the reality of the coronavirus really hit home for us here in the Territory.

We started the week with five positive cases. We ended the week with 15.

It's controlled, there is still no community spread, but all of that could change in an instant.

Down south and in the east, the rate of growth does appear to be slowing, but the numbers are still growing.

So this isn't the time to put the brakes on our work.

It's time to keep doing whatever it takes.

We've kept Territorians safe by always staying ahead of the game.

And staying ahead of the game means working round the clock to scale up our measures when we need to.

Over the weekend, we made two important changes.

First, the small number of people still arriving from overseas are now taken into forced quarantine for 14 days. There is no self-quarantine.

Second, we moved to police checks for every person currently in self-quarantine.

So the one per cent who try to break the rules will get caught, they will get punished.

Over the weekend, I've been working on additional options to strengthen our borders.

When the threat from overseas grew larger, we acted.

And I have now formed the view that the threat that the rest of Australia poses to the safety of the Northern Territory is too great.

So this morning, I told my Cabinet I wanted even tougher border controls, and they have agreed.

Our actions so far have stemmed the flow of interstate arrivals to the Territory.

Now I want to stop the flow.

From midnight on Wednesday, people entering the Territory from interstate – including Territorians returning home – will be required to spend 14 days in forced quarantine, not self-quarantine.

The rule that apply to overseas arrivals will now apply to all arrivals.

So that means if you come Adelaide, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne – from anywhere – you will be directed straight to a hotel that is secured by us and guarded by us.

And you will stay in your room for 14 days.

And from midnight on Friday, if you still insist on coming to the Territory, whether from overseas or interstate, you will go into forced quarantine, but we will not be paying the bill.

You will be made to stay where we tell you to stay, but you will pay for it, not us.

We have given you enough notice.

And if you are starting to think I don't want you here, you're right.

Do not come here. We do not want you here. Sorry, but not right now.

When all of this is over, please come to the Territory, it's the greatest place on earth and we'd be happy to have you.

But not right now.

To those who say just close the borders completely:

Frankly, that's what I want to do. And if I had the power to do it, I'd do it right now.

But we are at the very limit of what we can legally do here.

We are drawing a red line right around the Territory. And we are saying to the interstaters in the east, the south and the west: do not cross this line.

If you do, we'll take you into forced quarantine, and we will keep you there.

So make it easier for yourself, make it easier for us, and just don't come.

Right now, we have to look after ourselves.

Right now, it is Territory first.

And if that means putting the other states last, we'll do that.