



MEDIA RELEASE

Kimberley Regional Group

20 May 2020

KIMBERLEY LEADERS UNITE ON A 12 POINT COVIDSAFE PLAN TO REOPEN

The Kimberley Regional Group joined key regional leaders yesterday to provide the Premier with a 12 point plan for a COVIDSafe reopening of the Kimberley border on the 18th June 2020.

This represents the first time that all key leaders across the region have united, delivering a powerful message of cooperation.

The group recognised that significant positive change has occurred in Western Australia since the initial restrictions were put into place.

Rapid COVID-19 testing facilities are now available in Broome with kits being distributed to Aboriginal communities throughout the region.

There is far greater awareness across the region of the need for hygiene and clear protocols, including those relating to isolation, to manage any infection that may occur.

The success is evidenced by the fact that it has been 41 days since the last confirmed case of COVID-19 in the Kimberley and no cases recorded amongst our resident Aboriginal population.

Lifting the border restrictions to reunite the Kimberley with the rest of Western Australia will enable families, businesses and communities to move firmly into the recovery phase of this COVID-19 pandemic, improving mental health outcomes and our economic destiny.

Signatories to the letter outlining the COVIDSafe pathway for reopening the Kimberley were:

- Tyrone Garstone Chair COVID-19 Aboriginal Taskforce
- Peter Yu Chair Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group,
Member COVID-19 Aboriginal Taskforce
- Lawford Benning Member Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group,
Member COVID-19 Aboriginal Taskforce
- Myrtle Ward Chair, Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services Ltd
- Harold Tracey President Shire of Broome
- David Menzel President Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley
- Malcolm Edwards President Shire of Halls Creek
- Geoff Haerewa President Shire of Derby West Kimberley
- Chris Mitchell Chair Kimberley Regional Group and Kimberley Zone
- Elsia Archer Chair Regional Development Australia (Kimberley)

12 POINT PLAN FOR A COVIDSAFE REOPENING OF THE KIMBERLEY

1. Lift the Biosecurity (Human Biosecurity Emergency) (Human Coronavirus with Pandemic Potential) (Emergency Requirements for Remote Communities) Determination 2020 as it relates to the Kimberley on the 18th of June 2020.
2. Communicate the intent to remove the border control as early as possible to enable agencies to prepare, businesses to begin the planning and the marketing of a 2020 northern tourism and the reactivation of other businesses across the region.
3. Encourage the State to work with individual Aboriginal communities to determine their readiness for the lifting of those restrictions including those that select to continue their isolation.
4. Request that State Government stand ready to support local health services, particularly community controlled Aboriginal health services, to respond immediately to any outbreaks and take appropriate action as required.
5. The development and implementation of an Outbreak Management Plan to respond should there be a positive case and close contact in a community, including the safeguarding of specific locations (rather than putting in the restriction across the Kimberley).
6. The development of a Management Plan for Tourists testing positive, including an evacuation and quarantine protocol where required, noting that protocols are in place for people from Aboriginal communities.
7. Strong encouragement by the State government, local government, tourism businesses and other organisations to ensure that all visitors to the region have downloaded the COVIDSafe App.
8. Implementation of a Communication Strategy including signage at Visitors Centres, hotels and roadhouses to promote social distancing, hygiene and other key messages to safeguard against the transmission of COVID-19.
9. The delivery of information and signage by local and state governments to clarify where visitors may and may not travel including relevant penalties.
10. Improved Point of Care Testing – GeneXpert machines available in key locations including OVAHS – Kununurra; YYMS – Halls Creek; WACHS – Fitzroy Crossing; DAHS – Derby; Balgo; Bidadanga; Kalumburu; Beagle Bay for testing with a 45 minute result and the increase in availability of cartridges.
11. State Government financial and other forms of support for clinics likely to be accessed by visitors including, but not limited to, Bidadanga, the Dampier Peninsula and Gibb River Road clinics.
12. An immediate focus on housing construction to ensure the accommodation capacity to meet any demand surge in relation to quarantining of community members and address housing issues across the region in the medium term which will also kick start the local economy as well as deliver local jobs and training opportunities.

ATTRIBUTABLE COMMENTS:

Chris Mitchell, Chair Kimberley Zone and Kimberley Regional Group:

- I would like to recognise all of the stakeholders that came together to work through the process of reopening and the development of a COVIDSafe pathway.
- The level of cooperation and collaboration in developing this plan shows the maturity of relationships in the region.
- We look forward to welcoming visitors to our stunning region and encourage everybody to look north this winter for their holidays.

Harold Tracey President Shire of Broome:

- The coming together of all parties to ensure a COVIDSafe reopening of the Kimberley demonstrates how important getting this right is to the region.
- We must all play our part, the State has the lead role, supported by local governments and Aboriginal Corporations but everybody must remain COVID-19 aware.
- Together we can put the elements in place that keep our community safe whilst letting our businesses recover from this pandemic.

David Menzel President Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley:

- We were particularly interested in communicating early the likely date when restrictions would be loosened, in order for the community and businesses to begin planning for resumption of trading.
- The relaxation of the Kimberley border not only supports the tourism industry, it also enables mining and other businesses to come out of hibernation.
- The KRG is continuing to work with relevant agencies, to ensure planning was appropriate and to develop plans for recovery from the impacts of the pandemic.

Geoff Haerewa President Shire of Derby West Kimberley:

- We have been working with the Kimberley Aboriginal Health Services and Aboriginal leaders during this pandemic to minimise the impacts from COVID-19.
- It is important to remember that we have hundreds of Aboriginal businesses in the Kimberley and they are keen to get back to work in a COVIDSafe environment.
- The 12 point plan has been carefully developed to protect our community and respect those that wish to remain isolated for a more extended period, whilst opening up for business to save our economy.

Malcolm Edwards President Shire of Halls Creek

- The Kimberley is home to some of the most spectacular tourist locations on earth such as the Purnululu National Park and we look forward to welcoming visitors to our region in our COVIDSafe framework.

- The Shire of Halls Creek is committed to local employment to empower our local communities and strongly supports the role of the construction sector in the economic recovery in our region.
- We had good relationships with all stakeholders during the lockdown phase of the pandemic and look forward to working with them during this recovery phase.

END

About the Kimberley Regional Group

The Kimberley Regional Group (KRG) represents the four Shires in the region being:

- Shire of Broome
- Shire of Derby West Kimberley
- Shire of Halls Creek
- Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley

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