



Keeping remote Indigenous communities safe

Update 3 – 28 April 2020

Context

This bulletin provides an overview of the MCA's approach to leading industry-wide efforts to keep Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This approach recognises the importance of community-led approaches, including by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health organisations, continuing focus on remote Indigenous communities as a priority and strong industry and stakeholder engagement.

The bulletin also provides an update on support for locally-led responses to meet health, social, food, infrastructure and other community needs.

An industry-wide approach to keep workers, families and communities safe

The health and safety of workers, families and host communities is always the minerals industry's first priority.

This focus, together with our long-term partnerships with Traditional Owners, Indigenous organisations and communities, meant industry recognised its special responsibility to Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities and people during the COVID-19 pandemic early.

The MCA adopted the following approach to support the sector's responsibility:

1. Recognising the importance of community-led approaches, nationally and locally, by:

- [Engaging](#) with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander COVID-19 Advisory Group to ensure the resources sector health and safety protocols support community aspirations
- Emphasising the importance of industry supporting community-led approaches in the protocols, [guidelines](#) and all communications.

2. Maintaining focus on remote communities as a priority through:

- Ensuring that support for Indigenous communities is a priority discussed at weekly MCA COVID-19 Working Group meetings. Senior industry leaders are briefed on the latest advice, areas for industry focus and MCA engagement
- Convening regular meetings with senior industry representatives responsible for community and Indigenous engagement to support collaboration and information-sharing
- Sharing updates from the National Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Organisation, government and other stakeholders across industry between meetings.

3. Engaging regularly and transparently with Indigenous organisations, governments and other stakeholders and across industry, including:

- Actively engaging with Professor James Ward, NACCHO, the Department of Health Indigenous Engagement Unit and other key stakeholders for advice and feedback
- Engaging with companies for feedback, input and to understand local challenges and opportunities
- Key tools and updates are also publicly available at <https://minerals.org.au/communities>.



This approach is underpinned by stringent testing and monitoring, workforce roster changes, health, hygiene and cleaning measures and other requirements.

The MCA is also review its stakeholder engagement approach to continually improve national and local partnerships and identify policy approaches to meet long-term community needs.

Staying vigilant – new tools to assist industry

While the spread of COVID-19 in Australia is slowing, the minerals industry remains highly vigilant as the threat to remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities remains high. Companies continue to implement robust measures to protect communities in addition to biosecurity requirements.

To support this, the MCA has developed two new industry tools in consultation with Indigenous organisations and the Department of Health Indigenous Engagement Unit. The tools align with four phases identified in the [COVID-19 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Populations Management Plan](#).

The tools are:

- A minerals industry response framework which highlights specific ways companies can assist local responses in each pandemic phase
- A minerals industry health response flowchart which provides a step-by-step guide to key actions to support community-led health responses in each pandemic phase.

Members are encouraged to consider using these tools when developing local plans and processes.

Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to meet community needs

The MCA regularly updates a list of practical industry support for community-led responses on its website. See <https://minerals.org.au/communities>

In addition, the minerals industry has [voiced](#) its support for broader measures to assist community-led preparations and responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. The MCA also supports government measures informed by community feedback to improve short and long-term food security as well as sustainable solutions to other needs in remote communities.

As part of its review of industry's approach to keeping communities safe, the MCA will listen and take advice about how industry can best support community-led solutions to meet these needs.

Next steps

Listening to and engaging to respect community wishes and support local needs remains an industry priority. The MCA is also in the early stages of engaging with national stakeholders to understand how it can best support long-term solutions to the needs of remote communities.

The MCA will also promote its community engagement approach across social media channels.