



The NT must become a Special Control Area for COVID 19 or else there will be a lot of preventable deaths

The Combined Aboriginal Organisations of Alice Springs held a special meeting to discuss the threat of COVID 19 to Aboriginal communities across Central Australia.

“All organisations were really clear that we need to make the entire NT and the tristate region a Special Control Area for COVID 19. This means that we want to apply the same travel restrictions that apply to international visitors nationally to visitors to the Northern Territory from any Australian jurisdiction.”

“This is really our only hope of preventing the NT from experiencing the type of exponential spread that is now being seen in Sydney, Melbourne and other Australian cities. More of the same will just give the same outcomes,” said Donna Ah Chee, one of the spokespersons for the Combined Aboriginal organisations (CAO).

“If we don’t protect the regional centres in the NT then we are not protecting remote communities. Aboriginal people move in and out of our regional centres all the time for life saving health care, to get back on to Centrelink payments and to buy food at affordable prices. This will not just stop overnight. We have to make sure that the regional centres in the NT are also protected in order to protect our remote communities,” said Peter Renehan, another spokesperson for the CAO.

“In addition to this, there are many vulnerable people living in town camps and other areas in the regional centres. They also deserve to be better protected,” he continued.

“We have to stop pretending that the health system will cope no matter how well prepared we try to make it. We don’t have the workforce or the infrastructure in intensive care to cope with the surge that will come if we let this pandemic unleash its full force on the NT. Look at Italy, Holland, Spain and other European countries – they all thought they could cope and are now telling us not to make the mistakes that they made,” continued Donna Ah Chee.

“Apart from the inability of the health system to cope, our communities cannot suddenly overcome the additional susceptibility to this infection due to underlying chronic diseases, overcrowding, lack of food security, inadequate income and many other social determinants that will see this virus become a “super spreader” if allowed in. There is no immediate fix to these issues,” said Peter Renehan.

“We must do everything possible to stop this virus from entering the NT. We don’t accept a flatted curve we want a continuous flat line when it comes to COVID 19 and this is our best chance of achieving this,” concluded Donna Ah Chee

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CAO is Central Land Council, Tangentyere Council, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, NT Centre for Appropriate Technology, Gap Youth Centre, CAAPU, NPY Women’s Council, CAAFLU, Desert Knowledge Australia, Waltja