Two Diamond Princess Passengers positive for COVID-19

Yesterday 164 people from the Diamond Princess Cruise ship arrived at the Howard Springs Quarantine Facility to begin their 14 day quarantine period.

All passengers were health screened before being allowed to leave the ship, none had positive tests or any symptoms of disease. They were monitored throughout the flight, screened again at the RAAF Base in Darwin and again on arrival at the Manigurr-ma Village.

Six people were identified as having minor respiratory symptoms and/or fever. They were immediately separated from others at the airport and went directly into isolation at the Village. Two of those people have since tested positive for COVID-19 infection.

Both remain well and are being housed in a separate isolation unit at the village, while public health authorities from their home States organise medical evacuation for both the patients and their partners.

Given there was continued evidence of spread of infection on board the Diamond Princes in recent days, the development of some positive cases after return to Australia is not unexpected, despite all of the health screening before departure.

Fellow passengers and crew on the Qantas flight which returned people trapped on the Diamond Princess can be assured all measures were taken to ensure their protection.

The small number on the plane meant passengers could be spread out and higher risk passengers were seated in a separate section. All passengers wore masks except when eating and were provided with alcohol hand wipes.

The volunteer crew were instructed on how to keep a good social distance from passengers and wore P2 masks and gloves throughout the flight.

Most of the direct interaction with passengers was undertaken by highly trained members of the AUSMAT team on board, who wore full personal protection equipment.

The AUSMAT team is well prepared for the possibility of people in quarantine becoming unwell. The protocols they have implemented are designed to protect others in the facility, Howard Springs locals and the broader Australian community from situations just like this.
The health of all other people housed at Howard Springs will continue to be closely monitored. Daily health screening of all of the people at the Facility continues and any person found to have any symptoms will be tested in accordance with the national guidelines.

I can assure the Howard Springs Community that this development poses no risk to the broader community.

ENDS

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