

Coronavirus Outbreak Plans: Video 1 (Community Quarantine story)

The following script was the basis of the Yolngu matha translation heard in the video. There may be slight differences based on the translation.

Hi, my name is Dr Ruth and I work for the Top End Health Service in Darwin. I usually fly out to remote communities to work in the clinics there.

For the last few months, I have been working with the NT Government to come up with a plan for how we can keep Aboriginal communities safe from COVID-19.

There are some people who think that COVID-19 is a whitefella disease and that Aboriginal people won't get sick. But we know that COVID-19 has already spread to over 200 countries around the world. Over 40 million people have got sick and over 1 million people have died from coronavirus.

So we know COVID-19 can make anyone sick. It doesn't matter what country you're from, whether it's hot or whether it's cold, what language you speak, what the colour of your skin is. COVID-19 can make you sick.

Other First Nations communities around the world have got sick with COVID-19. A lot of people have died including the elders and traditional healers.

Some Australian scientists have looked at what might happen if COVID-19 comes to a remote Aboriginal community. They predict that if one person gets sick and nobody does anything different to normal, COVID-19 will spread like wildfire. After one month, 99% of people living in that community will get sick. Almost everyone in the community will get sick. Some people will only get a little bit sick but some people will get very sick, and some people will die.

Doctors are most worried about the elders, and people with diabetes, people with kidney disease. We know there are a lot of people with sicknesses like that in remote Aboriginal communities, so we can't let that happen.

But the scientists found out that not too many people will get sick if we follow a 'community quarantine' pathway. Community quarantine means everybody in the community will stay in their house for 14 days. It means we will all keep away from people we don't live with for 14 days or more, to stop the spread of that sickness.

It can take 14 days before we know that someone is sick from COVID-19. That's why people will stay in quarantine for 14 days.

The reason we should follow this quarantine pathway is because at the moment we don't have a vaccine for coronavirus. We think we might get one this year, but we don't know when yet. When we know more about the vaccine story, we will bring you more information. But until then, we need to keep washing our hands and doing that 'physical distancing', and we need to be ready to follow this quarantine pathway I am telling you about now. Quarantine is one of our best tools, or weapons, to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Quarantine means everybody will stay in their house or yard for 14 days, and health workers like me will test everybody to make sure that no-one has the virus. If anyone is sick we will take them to hospital and take everyone they've been living with or near to into quarantine at Howard Springs.

If we do that, the scientists think we will stop the spread of coronavirus in the community. Then we will know that everybody is not sick and we will not stay in quarantine for a long time, like they did in Melbourne.

When the first person gets sick with COVID-19 in a remote Aboriginal community, this is when we will start this plan. Everybody in the community will go home, stay home and stay safe for 14 days.

We need you to do this so you can protect yourself, protect your family and protect the entire community. We need everybody to go home, stay home and stay safe.

Staying at home for two weeks or more will be hard. People can't move around and visit their family and friends. To help everyone with whatever they need, a 'Rapid Response Team' will fly into the community.

The Rapid Response Team will be made up of doctors, nurses, police and other workers. And the Government might even ask the army to come and help us.

The Rapid Response Team has two jobs. One is to visit every house in the community every day. We will test everybody in the community for COVID-19. We will test everybody at the beginning and the end of the two weeks. And we will come to your house to make sure everyone is OK. We will test your temperature, and ask if you have a fever or a cough.

The second job of the Rapid Response Team is to make sure you have whatever you need. We will bring you food and medicine. The army might come in to bring food and medicine to everyone's house. The Rapid Response Team workers can also bring you ŋarali' (cigarettes and tobacco) too, if you ask them and give them the money for it.

They will also help the health workers at the clinic, help the local police, and help in any other way we can to keep the community safe while you are staying inside for 14 days.