

## **What is the 'New Normal': Coronavirus Update July 17**

*This is the Plain English script the corresponding YolŃu matha radio program is based on. It is not an exact translation of the recording. It is provided here primarily to give non-YolŃu matha speakers an understanding of the resource content.*

*The accuracy of the content has been confirmed by the Department of the Chief Minister (DCM), in its role as the head of the Public Information Group for East Arnhem Land. This version was last updated on July 17, 2020.*

*Some details have been updated on this document that have not been updated on the audio recording, including in Pt 4. Please listen to News Updates on the YolŃu Radio [Facebook page](#) and ARDS' [COVID-19 Resources page](#) for recent updates.*

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**Languages:** Duwala/Gumatj, DharŃu & English

### **1. This is a story about changes to coronavirus laws (0:00min - )**

It is a story to answer the questions, 'Is coronavirus finished? Is it still a worry for YolŃu? How can YolŃu prepare for it?'

Laws about coronavirus have been changing. In March, strong new laws were started to keep people sick with coronavirus out of Arnhem Land. The Government has started taking some of these laws away. But some laws will still stay.

Many people in the NT want life to 'go back to normal'. When the Government uses the phrase 'the New Normal', it is their way of saying: coronavirus is not finished, we still need to be careful. But if everyone works together, we will keep safe without some of the very strong laws we had before.

In this 'New Normal' time, the Government is keeping some fences up. But the government is now also trusting YolŃu to put their own fence up to stop that virus from spreading, by following pathways like physical distancing and handwashing, and getting tested if you have cold or flu like symptoms.

The Government wants to remind everyone that physical distancing is the best way for us to avoid catching that virus and giving it to other people. We need to keep being careful about that virus. We don't know if someone will bring that virus in to the NT. That's why it will be good if we follow the physical distancing pathway every day.

This story will talk about the new changes to coronavirus laws, and how Yolŋu can prepare for 'the New Normal'.

## **2. Is coronavirus finished? Should Yolŋu still be worried about coronavirus? (c.11min)**

It might look like the coronavirus is finished, and some people might be saying there is nothing to worry about anymore. But it is not finished. There are thousands of people sick with coronavirus around the world. Every day people are dying from coronavirus. In America, about 1,000 people are still dying from coronavirus every day. And there is still some virus in places like Melbourne and Sydney and Perth. At the start of July, doctors in Melbourne were finding more than 100 new people with coronavirus every day. The virus is spreading quickly to lots of people in Melbourne.

Someone in Melbourne might be sick, jump on a plane to Darwin, and make someone else sick. That other person might be a worker in Nhulunbuy, and bring it to Arnhem Land. Then it might spread like a bushfire.

Scientists are trying to make a coronavirus 'vaccine' – medicine we can take to stop coronavirus from making us sick, like a flu shot. But we won't have this medicine for a long time. So we will need to keep following physical distancing and washing our hands often until a vaccine is found.

We need to think of coronavirus as a cyclone that could still hit us any time up to Christmas, and maybe for even longer. We could be living in this 'new normal'-time for a long time.

## **3. Then why is the Government taking away the coronavirus laws? (c. 17min-)**

The government knows that people can't stay inside for ever. Because people have been following the rules, in the NT and around Australia, we have stayed safe up to now.

In March and April, lots of people were getting sick in places like Melbourne or Sydney. In March and April, 20 people in Victoria died from coronavirus sickness, and 50 people were killed in New South Wales.

Then, because people were washing their hands and following 'physical distancing', people were not spreading that virus. It started to slow down.

The NT Government was thinking about that virus slowing down, and listening to people who were saying, "these coronavirus laws are so hard". The Government is thinking about this and saying, "OK, we will take away some of the hard laws, but everyone will still need to

be very careful. They will have to follow a good pathway to protect themselves, because coronavirus is not finished.”

Then, in June, some people started getting coronavirus in Melbourne again. They spread it to other people, and very quickly there were lots of people sick. Many people were in hospital and a few people died. In July, people started spreading coronavirus in Sydney too.

So the Government is stopping some of the hard rules, but other rules will continue. And the Government and other organisations are making plans for every community and homeland, so that if the virus gets into Arnhem Land, there is a pathway to follow. Having these strong plans is one reason why the rules are being relaxed. We will tell you more about these plans in a minute.

#### **4. What coronavirus laws will be taken away on July 17? What laws are still going? (20:13min- )**

*NB: This information has been updated since we recorded the audio program.*

In April and May, it was hard for people sick with coronavirus to bring it into Arnhem Land. The coronavirus laws were like a big fence around Arnhem Land, stopping people from bringing coronavirus here. People could not fly or drive into the NT without staying indoors in quarantine for two weeks. And only a few people were allowed to travel from Darwin or Katherine to Arnhem Land.

Now some of those laws have been taken away, to make things easier for people who need to travel around.

From July 17, people who travel to Darwin and Gove from cities like Perth, Adelaide, Cairns and Canberra, will not quarantine.

But people flying or driving to the NT from Melbourne, or anywhere else in Victoria, will be taken by police to a quarantine motel in Howard Springs. So will anyone travelling from Sydney.

This is because lots of people in Melbourne are getting sick from coronavirus. At the start of July, doctors found over 1,000 new people with coronavirus in Melbourne. Over 100 people were in Melbourne hospitals. 30 Melbourne residents have died from coronavirus, including four old people who passed away at the start of July. People are getting sick in Sydney too and spreading the virus around.

Anyone coming from Melbourne or Sydney will be taken straight to quarantine by police. Police will be at the airports and on the roads coming into the NT. They will ask people,

‘Where are you coming from?’ If someone has been in Melbourne, Sydney or any other place where lots of people are spreading coronavirus, police will take them to Howard Springs.

They will stay there for two weeks. And they will get tested for coronavirus. If they refuse to get tested, they will stay inside in quarantine for another 10 days – 24 days all together – so we know they are not sick and can’t make anyone else sick.

People from Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland, Canberra, or Tasmania will not quarantine. They can walk out of the airport and walk around anywhere, without quarantining first. This is because not many people have coronavirus in these places. But the NT Government says if coronavirus starts spreading in any of these places, they will make these travellers stay in quarantine too.

The law to stop people flying to Darwin from overseas has not been taken away. Because many people in overseas countries like America and England are still getting sick every day from coronavirus. Anyone who flies to the NT from overseas is forced to stay at a hotel for two weeks, to keep them away from everyone in case they are sick.

## **5. What other laws have already been taken away? (26:30min -)**

On June 5, the Australian Government took away some of the travel laws made to stop people in Darwin or Katherine from bringing coronavirus into Arnhem Land.

The main travel law was like this: Most YolŃu and Balanda in Darwin and Katherine who wanted to go to Arnhem Land would ‘quarantine’ for two weeks before they could go to Arnhem Land.

Now this rule has been taken away. If you are already in the Northern Territory, YolŃu or Balanda can fly or drive to Arnhem Land without quarantining, police won’t stop you.

But any balanda who wants to travel around Arnhem Land will still ask the NLC for a permit. The NLC will not give Balanda a permit if their work is not very important for the community. Balanda can also get a permit for fishing, or for camping if they tell the NLC and Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation where they are camping.

YolŃu can travel from one Arnhem Land community or homeland to another without a permit.

There were also laws to stop lots of people meeting together in one place. But these laws have finished. In May, the Government took away the law that said only 10 people would go to funerals and other big gatherings. Now anyone can go to funerals, or another event with lots of people together. But they should follow physical distancing and wash their hands with soap often.

## **6. What can Yolŋu do to keep safe? (c. 32min - )**

Because the Government has taken down some the laws keeping coronavirus out, they are trusting Yolŋu to 'put their own fence up' to stop that virus from spreading.

We will do this by following pathways like:

- physical distancing;
- handwashing with soap;
- calling the clinic straight away if we have symptoms like a cold or flu; and
- only travelling to Darwin or Katherine if we really need to.

Following 'physical distancing', or some people call it 'social distancing', means:

- You will stand or sit 1.5m from anyone who you don't live with.
- You will not shake hands or touch hands with someone you don't live with.

It is good to do this, and also to wash your hands with soap often.

We know this is a hard story for Yolŋu. The Government is asking us to keep our distance, but we live in overcrowded houses.

But try to follow this pathway if you can. If some Yolŋu or many Yolŋu try to follow it, it will help save the lives of many people if that sickness comes to Arnhem Land. Because we will all need to stay apart from each other if someone brings coronavirus to Arnhem Land.

Getting used to this new way of behaving is the best way we can protect our families from getting sick.

Another way we can protect ourselves is to phone the clinic whenever we feel unwell, like if we might have a cold or flu. If you feel unwell with:

- Fever, chills or sweating
- Sore throat
- Dry cough

- Runny nose
- Shortness of breath

Don't go directly to the clinic. Call them up, and they will tell you what to do.

And when we go to the clinic, we will follow the special pathway the clinic sets up for coronavirus. And at the clinic we will think about not touching things, and keeping our hands clean.

### **7. Is the Government making a plan for someone bringing coronavirus to Arnhem Land communities and homelands? (c. 41:20min)**

Yes. Government and organisations in Nhulunbuy and in communities are working on a plan so that if the virus gets into Arnhem Land, there is a pathway to follow. There is a coronavirus plan for each community – Gove Peninsula, Gapuwiyak, Ramingining, Yurrwi and Galiwin'ku – and the homelands.

Government workers in all the communities across East Arnhem are working with lots of organisations to prepare. The Government is working with Miwatj Health, the hospitals, the police, and other organisations. They are all working together on a plan for coronavirus hitting Arnhem Land.

This plan is called Local Pandemic Plan. The target of the plan is to find the first person sick with coronavirus and help that person so they don't spread it to lots of people where they live. And to stop other people in that place spreading it to other communities and homelands. And to make sure anyone who might be sick with coronavirus is taken to a hospital quickly.

If we have a good plan, we can act quickly, and hopefully stop too many people from getting sick.

ARDS is making a separate story to tell you more about these Local Pandemic Plans. We will put this story on the radio soon and bring it to different Yolngu leaders to hear.