

Information for Trade Partners

Pandemic H1N1 2009 – Update 30/09/2009

The Australian Government has introduced a number of significant measures to manage Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 since the emergence of the outbreak internationally.

Travel to Australia

Australia is 'open for business' and it is 'business as usual'. There are no travel restrictions in place within Australia.

Without a doubt Australia has one of the best health systems in the world to manage this new disease, which fortunately is mild in most cases.

The Australian tourism industry is also well prepared to respond to pandemic H1N1 2009. The industry has implemented preventative and risk reduction strategies and visitors should feel confident about visiting Australia.

Initial measures that were in place at Australian airports in response to the H1N1 outbreak internationally, including health declaration cards and thermal temperature screenings, are no longer required under the current PROTECT phase.

In addition, health authorities advise there is no need to wear face masks in Australia and that one of the most effective ways to protect you, your friends and family from the flu (whether seasonal or pandemic) is to practise good personal hygiene. That includes regular washing of hands, covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing and staying at least one metre from anyone who is unwell.

The Australian Government has robust plans in place to deal with influenza outbreaks. Australia also has a large stockpile of anti-viral medications that can be used if needed. More information on these measures is available at www.health.gov.au.

A hotline is also available for the public to receive health information about H1N1 2009. **The number is 180 2007.**

About H1N1 in Australia

Health authorities are reporting that the number of new confirmed H1N1 2009 cases and hospitalisations has decreased nationally, and that there are indications that the pandemic (H1N1) 2009 activity in Australia has peaked and is decreasing.



Australian Government



Tourism Australia

As of 30 September 2009, there have been 36,626 confirmed cases of H1N1 Influenza in Australia since the first case was confirmed in May 2009. This includes people who have been infected with the virus and have since recovered.

To date there have been 180 recorded deaths involving people who were being treated for a range of other diseases as well as testing positive to H1N1 2009.

In the vast majority of cases, H1N1 2009 is a mild illness which many people recover from without any medical treatment. However, for people with chronic medical conditions influenza can be severe.

The national response to H1N1 2009 is to target and treat those most vulnerable to severe complications from this disease. All governments are focusing their efforts on minimising these cases as much as possible. It is important to remember that H1N1 2009 remains mild in the vast majority of cases, and most people make a rapid and full recovery.

On 24 September, the Australian Government also announced that it will provide \$1.4 million in funding to the National Influenza Centres and other public health laboratories around the country to purchase automated influenza testing equipment.

Today (30 September) the Australian Government has commenced the national roll-out of the Panvax® H1N1 vaccine. The free vaccine will be made available initially to those Australians most at risk including pregnant women, those with chronic illnesses or morbid obesity, indigenous people in remote communities and health care workers.

The vaccine, developed by the Melbourne-based CSL Ltd, has been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) for use by people aged over 10 years. A trial of the vaccine's effectiveness in children is continuing.

About the PROTECT Phase

Australia is currently in a PROTECT phase to manage the H1N1 2009 outbreak. This phase recognises that the infection with H1N1 2009 is not as severe as originally envisaged when the Australian Health Management Plan for Pandemic Influenza (AHMPPI) was written in 2008 and that this new disease is mild in most cases, severe in some and moderate overall.

PROTECT sits alongside CONTAIN and SUSTAIN phases with a greater focus on treating and caring for people in whom the disease may be severe including pregnant women and those with respiratory disease (asthma, COAD), heart disease, diabetes, renal disease, morbid obesity, and immunosuppression.

Other key elements of the PROTECT phase include:

- Widespread school closures or school exclusion for students who have travelled to areas of high prevalence are no longer appropriate and will not be continued on a national basis.
- Voluntary home isolation for those with mild disease with supportive treatment only, such as over the counter medication.



Australian Government



Tourism Australia

- Antivirals from the national or state medical stockpiles will be provided to those people with moderate or severe disease or whose underlying conditions, after appropriate clinical assessment, could make them vulnerable to severe infection. It is not appropriate to provide antivirals to their otherwise healthy household contacts, nor will those contacts be placed into quarantine.