

Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier



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EXPLORING NEW QUARANTINE MODELS FOR THE LONG TERM

The Victorian Government is examining alternative models of mandatory quarantine, including a purpose-built accommodation hub outside of the CBD, to address the changing threat of new hyper-infectious, fast moving strains of coronavirus.

Experts across all jurisdictions are considering how to best guard against these new strains, both in terms of the changes we can make now and in the long term while we wait for the rollout of the vaccine.

A Victorian team of senior officials is well advanced on planning work that will include investigating parcels of land near Melbourne and Avalon airports that could be used to construct bespoke, stand-alone accommodation hubs.

Based on early advice from public health experts and COVID-19 Quarantine Victoria, the following specifications will be important in the design of any such hub:

- Flat structures (not multi-storey) that are adequately spaced are preferable
- Designs that allow for strict IPC protocols that are already in place in the existing program
- Individual rooms that cater to a variety of family sizes with self-contained bathroom facilities
- High quality or separate ventilation systems per room, including the use of windows
- Surfaces that are easily cleaned, to enable the highest standard of IPC protocols, and
- Separate and adequately sized staff facilities

Any hub of this kind could also be used for future emergency accommodation needs, including ongoing quarantine arrangements or bushfire emergency accommodation.

As part of the planning work, the Government will also send a delegation to Howard Springs in the Northern Territory to examine the quarantine facility there. The model at Howard Springs involves single-storey accommodation that may be much better suited to managing the new more infectious strains of the virus.

The work will also consider whether any new accommodation should be used in conjunction with hotel quarantine locations in the CBD, or as a stand-alone facility for the whole program.

The Government has already made significant changes to strengthen Victoria's quarantine program in light the UK strain and recent cases.

These include further strengthening PPE protocols, introducing buffer zones around family rooms and staggering of mealtimes - as well as conducting a second expert review of ventilation.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

"New, changing strains of the virus mean we need new thinking when it comes to mandatory quarantine and how we bring people home safely."

"Right across the country, governments are examining how to adapt to the changing threat we face – we need to listen to the experts and make the changes necessary to guard against this new challenge."

Quote attributable to Acting Minister for Police and Emergency Services Martin Foley

"At every step, we're acting on expert advice and making the changes necessary to strengthen our quarantine program in light of these new highly-infectious changing strains of the virus."

For more information call the coronavirus hotline on 1800 675 398 or visit coronavirus.vic.gov.au.