



Hon. Ken Wyatt AM MP
Minister for Indigenous Australians



Hon. Ben Wyatt MLA
WA Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

26 March, 2020

JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

Access restricted to protect people living in the Kimberley and remote Aboriginal communities

The Western Australian Government has partnered with the Commonwealth Government to implement new restrictions for access to designated regions in the State to protect the health and wellbeing of residents in the Kimberley and remote Aboriginal communities.

From 9pm on Thursday March 26, 2020, access will be restricted into the following regions:

- Kimberley (comprising all four local government areas);
- Shire of Ngaanyatjaraku;
- Parts of the Shire of East Pilbara that encompass the communities of Jigalong, Martu homeland communities and Kiwirrkurra.

These designated areas account for approximately a third of the geographical area of the State; and almost 90 per cent of Western Australia's remote communities and the remote Aboriginal population.

Under these arrangements, after 9pm on Thursday, March 26, 2020, any person who is outside a designated region can only enter that region if that person:

- is providing essential services or supplies; or
- has been quarantined from the general public for the previous 14 days

Other special exemptions may apply. The restrictions for the designated regions are enforceable through emergency determination powers under the Biosecurity Act 2015 (Cth). A jail term of up to five years could apply to those who breach the determination.

Within the designated regions and for all remote Aboriginal communities outside these designated regions, the State Government's [Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions](#) will continue to apply.

The directions mean that the only people who can enter a remote Aboriginal community are residents, those providing essential services and supplies, and those entering for family or cultural reasons. Breaches of these directions could attract a fine of up to \$50,000.

The State Government continues to work with community organisations and the mining industry to assist residents of remote Aboriginal communities to return home.

For more information, visit <http://www.wa.gov.au/aboriginalcommunities>

Comments attributed to Aboriginal Affairs Minister Ben Wyatt:

“The State and Commonwealth Governments are committed to working in partnership with Aboriginal communities to dramatically reduce the chances of COVID-19 spreading to those communities, and to respond rapidly if it does.

“We have adopted complementary legal measures to enforce this and protect vulnerable communities.

“The Commonwealth Determination of designated regions under the Biosecurity Act 2015 (Cth) will provide broad, regional protection for the Kimberley, Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku and remote parts of the Shire of East Pilbara.

“Within those designated regions, and for remote Aboriginal communities outside those regions, the State Government’s Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions will continue to provide community-specific protection.

“While the legal measures adopted provide remote community residents with a level of flexibility to move within their designated region, I reinforce the messages that the safest place for residents is in their communities.

“Everyone should follow Health Department advice on hygiene and social distancing; and travel should be for critical purposes only.

“Along with these coordinated actions, I am also seeking Commonwealth Government funding to support quarantine arrangements, food security and medical services and supplies.

“Premier Mark McGowan has announced that further restrictions on the movement between WA’s regions will be put in place shortly. Clear guidelines on this will be released in coming days.”

Comments attributed to Indigenous Australians Minister Ken Wyatt:

“Governments will support people who do not have appropriate alternate arrangements to self-isolate.

There will be exemptions to the travel restrictions for people entering to supply and deliver essential services and Governments are working hard to make sure these essential services and supplies will continue to remote areas.

People already in remote communities should stay there unless it is essential to leave for medical treatment.”

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