



Ministerial Submission

Cleared by: s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Date sent to MO: 22 November 2021

FOR: Senator the Hon Marise Payne

INFO: The Hon Dan Tehan MP

Action Requested By: 22 November 2021

Reason for Urgency: To ensure consular support systems are consistent with the National Plan.

Bringing Australians Home - Outcome of Registration Reviews

Key Issues: A further review of the consular registration database was completed on 17 November 2021 (MS21-001454), with the result that the number of Australians registered as seeking to return will be reduced to **7,578**, down from **22,809**. DFAT sought additional information from the 22,809 registrants and, based on their response, those Australians who are fully vaccinated with a TGA recognised vaccine and able to return on commercial flights have been moved off the return to Australia list. In addition, we have moved off the list those Australians who are located in countries with easy access to a vaccine but are still unvaccinated. We also removed those who did not respond to DFAT's emails on 25 October and 12 November. DFAT will provide assistance to those still needing to return, who will mainly be unvaccinated and without access to commercial flights.

Recommendation:

Decision:

That you:

- a) Note that a further **15,231** Australians and Permanent Residents are no longer registered as 'seeking to return' following removal of those already arrived, those who did not respond in the five day timeframe, those no longer needing help, those fully vaccinated with a TGA recognised vaccine, and those in a country with easy access to vaccines, including US, UK, and New Zealand. **Noted**
- b) Note that DFAT will continue to contact the remaining **7,578** registrants to provide them with assistance to return to Australia. **Noted**
- c) Note that DFAT will close the registration portal on 19 November (MS21-001322). **Noted**
- d) Note that Australians overseas who need emergency assistance will be advised to contact their nearest Embassy or Consulate, or to call the Consular Emergency Centre. **Noted**
- e) Note that we have separately provided your (Foreign Minister) office with a Communications Strategy. **Noted**

Domestic/Media Considerations: Ongoing media interest in the number of returning Australians.

Action:

Marise Payne / /

Information:

Noted

Dan Tehan / /

From: Kate Logan, FAS CCD, ISG | CCD | Consular Operations - COVID-19 Response

Contact: s 22(1)(a)(ii) , A/g AS OCB/CCD
s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Can this proposal be funded from within your existing divisional allocation (departmental/aid)? Not Applicable

If the proposal high risk/high value (over \$100m) concept has been approved by the Aid Governance Board? Not Applicable

Consultation: NIL



Background:

Following DFAT's review of the registration database on 11 November 2021, 22,253 Australians and Permanent Residents were moved off the 'seeking to return' registration database, with **22,809** remaining at that date, of which only 424 have amended their record back to 'seeking to return'. Those removed had either returned, no longer needed assistance or had not accessed their registration for six months or more. A further review commenced on 12 November (MS21001454), focussing on those who were fully vaccinated with a TGA recognised vaccine, those able to access commercial flights and those with easy access to a TGA recognised vaccine (around 41 countries). These groups were removed from the seeking to return register, along with those who did not respond to DFAT's email within five days. There is a provision for those who have been moved to 'register only' update their registration to 'seeking to return' if they consider they were moved in error (See Attachment A).

2. Overall the accessibility of vaccines has improved for Australians abroad and we continue to monitor the situation closely. We have tested this through our posts, which were asked to consider a range of factors relating to vaccine access, including:

- The accessibility of vaccines in general (i.e. regardless of whether TGA-approved);
- The accessibility of TGA-approved vaccines;
- Whether Australians were included in the domestic rollout; and
- Whether Australians had the same priority as local nationals in the domestic rollout.

3. s 47C(1), s 47E(d)

4. On this basis an additional **15,231** registrants have been moved off the return to Australia list. All registrants moved from the list will be advised by email that this action has been taken.

5. Emails will be sent to the remaining **7,578** registrants who have not received a TGA recognised vaccine or who have limited access to commercial flights, seeking further information to better understand how DFAT can assist their return and provide solutions using facilitated commercial flights and other consular support. They will be given a timeframe in which to respond.

