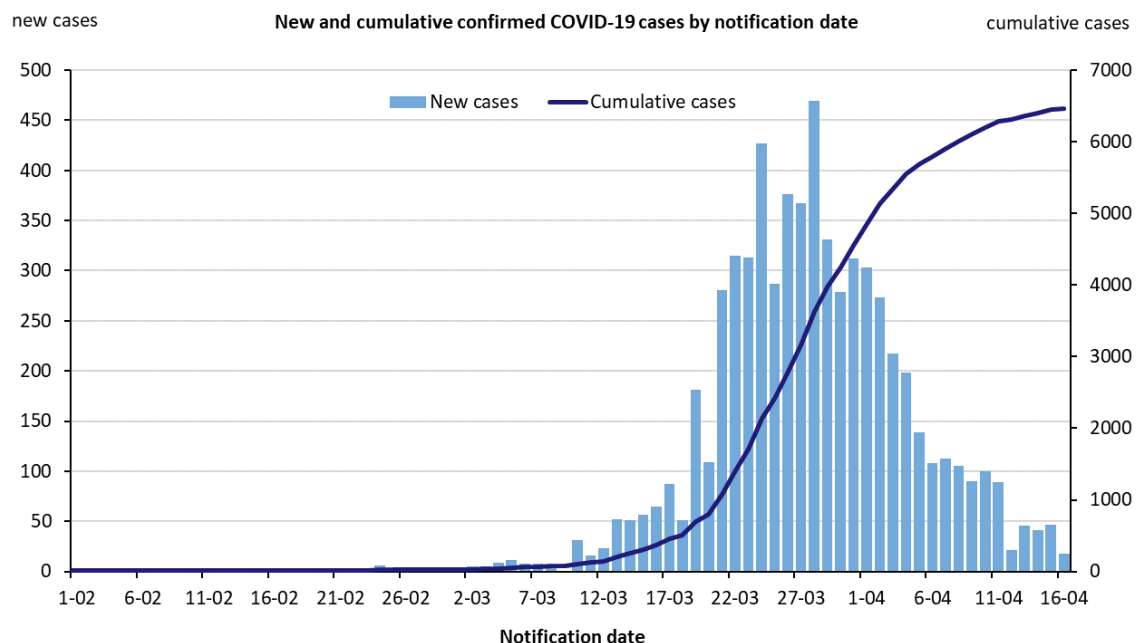


Consul-General of Japan in Sydney's Newsletter

No. 13 Australia's Response to Coronavirus (Part 3) — "Strategic Communication"

17 April 2020

In Australia, the number of new cases of COVID-19 has decreased significantly. We can see the effect of the prompt implementation of various measures, including comprehensive border control measures, early detection of people with infection and contact tracing of those they have had close contact with, restrictions applying to gathering and businesses, and social distancing.

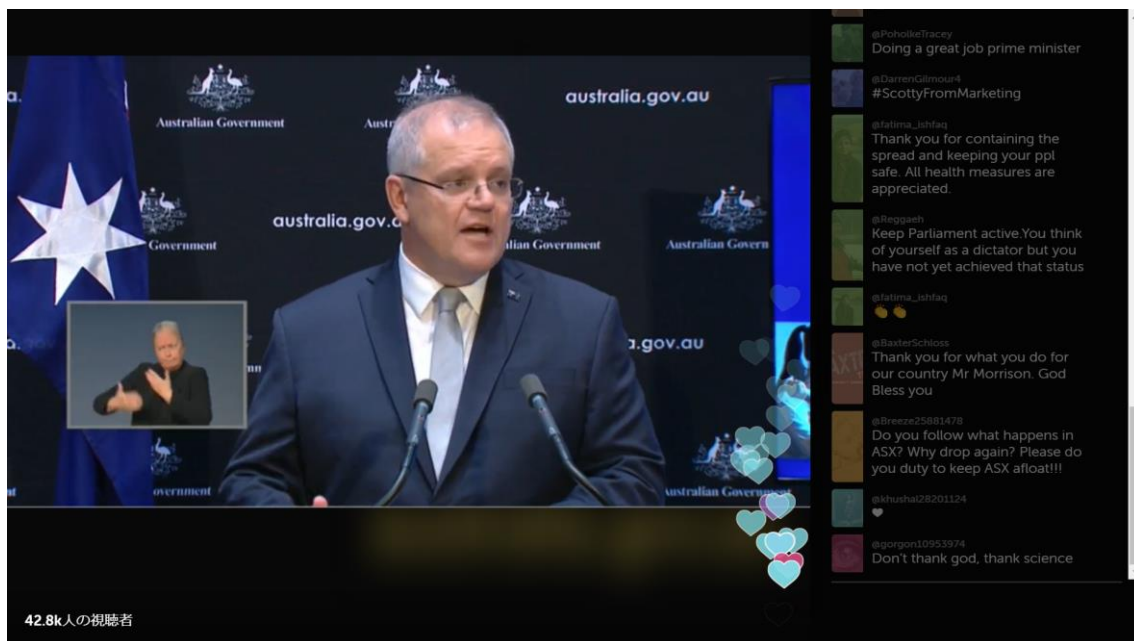


New and cumulative confirmed COVID-19 cases in Australia
(Australian Department of Health, 16 April)

Every day I have been following local policies regarding COVID-19. While participating in and practising the various measures, one thing has made a particularly strong impression on me — **it's not just the various measures that are being strategically developed** (which I introduced in the previous Consul-General's Newsletter), rather **it is how the Australian and state governments are realising proactive compliance among Australian nationals and residents through easy-to-understand explanations.**

I read an interview with a Japanese researcher, who pointed out that when facing a crisis such as COVID-19, in order to secure the cooperation of nationals and residents, it is extremely important that governments themselves fully understand their own strategies and then convey and disseminate them in a way that is easy for people to understand. There is a concept called “**strategic communication**” which seeks to change the actions and thoughts of targeted individuals or groups so that a strategic goal can be achieved.

In this issue of my newsletter, I would like to discuss the ways in which Australia is practising this “strategic communication” based on what I have observed. I hope my observations regarding COVID-19 measures will be useful to Japanese people living in Australia, and to people in Japan and around the world.



**Prime Minister Morrison at his press conference after the National Cabinet
(Prime Minister Morrison’s Twitter, 7 April)**

At the federal level, **Prime Minister Morrison holds press conferences straight after National Cabinet meetings, which are held twice a week or more, and when important policies are being announced.** On many occasions, related ministers, chief medical officers and other experts attend the press conference with the Prime Minister, and they give detailed explanations after Prime Minister Morrison speaks. In my previous newsletter, I introduced the policies and measures themselves; this time I focus on the effective way policies and measures are being conveyed to the public.

At the beginning of his press conferences, Prime Minister Morrison doesn't just focus on the items to be announced that day. He **gives a clear explanation of the latest situation and challenges**, and **thanks the people of Australia for their cooperation**. He also speaks directly and frankly as he **asks Australians for their cooperation**, saying for example "Don't travel during the Easter holidays", or as he **explains the future outlook**, saying "it will take six months or more" and "in parallel with the 'suppression phase' we have begun to examine the direction of the 'recovery phase'". In response to questions from reporters, he takes time to answer each question thoroughly. All press conferences are televised/webcast live, and several hours after the press conferences, transcripts, including questions and answers, are always made available online.



**NSW Premier Berejiklian's press conference,
with Police Commissioner and Chief Health Officer
(NSW Department of Health Facebook, 16 April)**

New South Wales, with its capital Sydney, has a population of approximately 8 million people. **Every weekday, NSW Premier Berejiklian holds a press conference at 8 o'clock in the morning, and on the weekend, the Premier or the NSW Minister for Health holds a press conference at midday** – the press conferences are held outdoors. After the Premier announces that day's main message or new policies, the NSW Chief Health Officer, the Police Commissioner and relevant ministers will give further detailed explanations of the current situation regarding COVID-19 cases, compliance of various regulations and

about new policies. Questions on specific topics are answered by relevant ministers or top officials attending the press conference with the Premier. **Issues that NSW residents and media have questions or concerns about are explained at these daily press conferences, and in this way, they serve as a type of clearing house.**

Every morning, Premier Berejiklian speaks without any notes during her opening remarks and this conveys a true sense of authority. **She never fails to thank the people of NSW and all those involved for their cooperation. The Premier directly explains the position of the NSW State Government to the public in her own words.** For example, yesterday (16 April), when speaking about having achieved an increase in the number of tests, she thanked the people of NSW and encouraged those living in areas which have many cases of community transmission to go and get themselves tested.

At the same time, the Premier acknowledges the importance of continuing economic activity in the state to help support employment and has announced that the NSW Government will develop investment in new regional infrastructure projects. She explained with great sincerity of wanting to create employment opportunities and give hope to families without reliable income or work, who must be able to send their children to school.

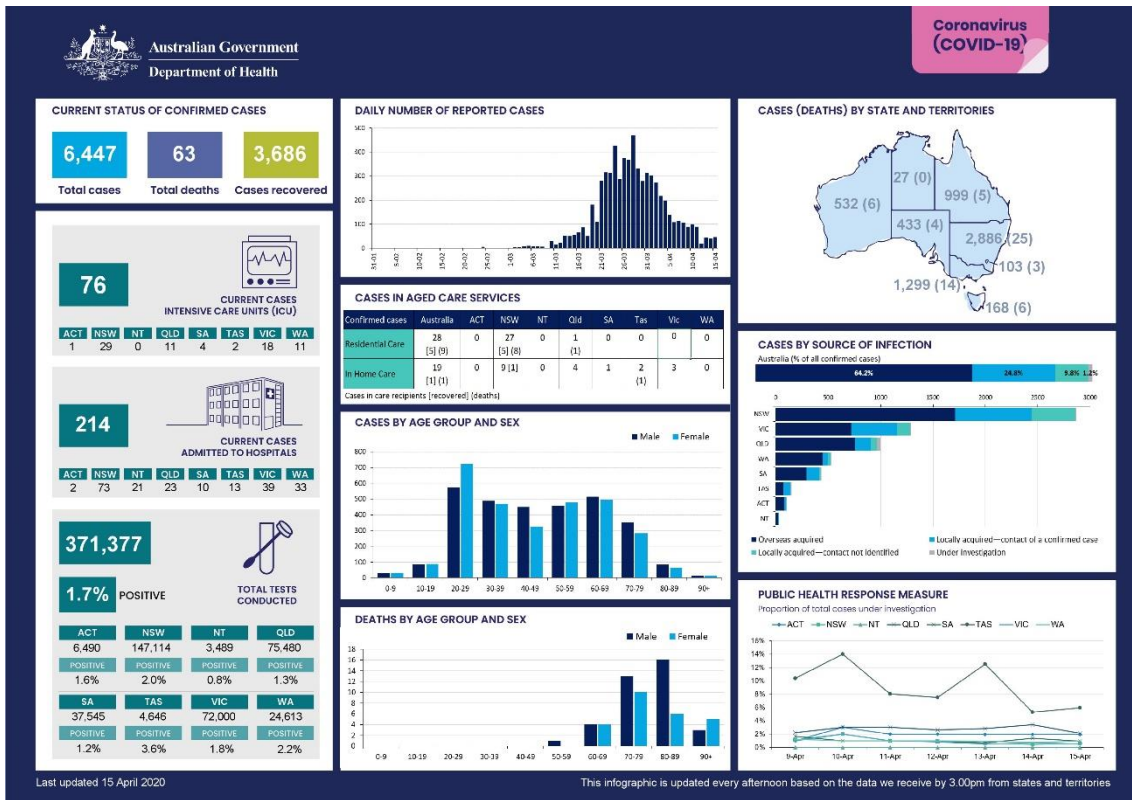
At these press conferences, journalists often ask difficult questions. In particular, there have been continuous questions critical of the NSW Government's handling of the Ruby Princess cruise ship, whose passengers were allowed to disembark in Sydney Harbour just after the Federal Government had announced the ban on cruise ships, and to which multiple COVID-19 infections and deaths have been linked. In response, the Premier has answered without hesitation, saying that now is not the time to be looking for someone to blame, rather her mission is to use all her energy towards ensuring the health and livelihoods of the people of New South Wales. She later announced that a special investigative committee into the Ruby Princess would be established, and this gave the impression of a strong government that would take direct responsibility in the matter.



NT Chief Administrator Gunner's press conference
(Chief Minister's Facebook, 16 April)

The Northern Territory (NT) has a population of around 250,000 people, but it is a vast area, and there are specific challenges such as those faced by indigenous communities living in remote areas of the territory. It was for this reason that the NT imposed a 14-day quarantine on anyone arriving from another Australian state. It is a strict measure and the cost of quarantine must be covered by the individuals (approximately \$2,500 for one person and \$5,000 for a family).

Chief Minister Gunner has held press conferences when making important announcements regarding the introduction of regulations such as quarantine and about economic policy, explaining matters in an easy-to-understand manner and thereby gaining people's understanding. At this point in time, there have been no new cases of infection in the last ten days and no cases of community transmission so far in the NT, but the Chief Minister emphasises the need to comply with these strict regulations in order to protect the lives of Territorians. In the case of the NT, the NT Minister for Health has held a series of daily press conferences, which are streamed live.



List of major statistics on the coronavirus (COVID-19) website
 (Australian Department of Health Coronavirus (COVID-19) website, 15 April)

Another characteristic of Australia’s strategic communication is the **use of ICT**. **The Federal, NSW and NT Governments have all established websites devoted to COVID-19 information**, and the information is laid out in a very user-friendly way. The content is updated daily, and on the Federal Government website, there is a dashboard-style infographic which gives a summary of major statistics. Also, the top page of the Australian Government’s main website, www.australia.gov.au, is now dedicated to the current COVID-19 situation, in keeping with a situation that has been described as a once-in-a-century event. In this way, transparency is being ensured and information is being disseminated widely to the public and the media.

Regarding health information and education, the Federal Department of Health launched a **coronavirus (COVID-19) campaign** in mid-March and has been **using everything from posters to all major types of social media**, employing the same logos and designs across all channels to ensure consistent messaging. These methods are being used widely in all states and territories, and public relations are efficient and effective.

In addition, the Federal Government has created **iOS and Android apps** and set up a **WhatsApp channel**. In NSW, previously used largely for driver licences, the **Service NSW app now has information about the COVID-19 situation**, and the NSW Government recommends downloading this app.

Furthermore, **the news conferences** I referred to above **are all streamed live**: Prime Minister Morrison's on SBS News' Twitter, NSW Premier Berejiklian's on the NSW Department of Health's Facebook and NT Chief Minister Gunner's on ABC Darwin's Facebook.



The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the Australian Government Department of Home Affairs website. It includes a 'Menu' icon, the Australian Government crest, and the text 'Australian Government Department of Home Affairs'. Below the navigation bar, the page title is 'COVID-19 - Japanese'. A dropdown menu is set to 'Japanese | 日本語'. At the bottom of the page, there are links for '教育', '雇用', and 'オーストラリアのコミュニティのための情報', along with 'Digital Assistant' and 'Feedback' buttons.

Japanese-language webpage for coronavirus (COVID-19) information (Australian Department of Home Affairs)

Australia is known for its **multiculturalism** and it is no surprise that **information is being disseminated in multiple languages**. At the top of the Australian Federal Government's special coronavirus (COVID-19) website, there is a link to **information in many languages including Japanese (the Australian Department of Home Affairs creates this content as it is responsible for multicultural affairs)**. In addition to this, **the public broadcaster SBS, which supports multiculturalism, provides information about COVID-19 in 64 different languages, including Japanese**, via its website.



Social distancing being observed at a bakery in Sydney (13 April)

As I have explained above, the Australian Government is employing various measures and devices to achieve “**strategic communication**”. As a result of these efforts, Australians have convinced themselves of the need to **comply with the various regulations, not least to ensure that social distancing is observed as they go about their daily lives.**

All countries, including Japan, have their own cultural settings, so there may not be any points that can be directly applied from the Australian experience, however, **the need for “strategic communication” to ensure the cooperation of nationals and residents is surely a common challenge for all countries.** I will continue working to convey the messages of the Australian Government to Japanese nationals living here, and as I go about this work, I would like to take the opportunity to inform other countries, including Japan, so that they may make use of the Australian Government’s good work.

Australian Government coronavirus (COVID-19) special website

<https://www.australia.gov.au/>

Prime Minister of Australia website (transcripts of press conferences and media announcements)

<https://www.pm.gov.au/media>

NSW Government coronavirus (COVID-19) special website

<https://preview.nsw.gov.au/covid-19>

NT Government coronavirus (COVID-19) special website

<https://coronavirus.nt.gov.au/>

Australian Department of Health - coronavirus (COVID-19) campaign

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/launch-of-the-coronavirus-covid-19-campaign>

Australian Government coronavirus (COVID-19) apps

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/coronavirus-australia-app>

Service NSW app (NSW Government)

<https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/campaign/service-nsw-mobile-app>

Australian Department of Home Affairs coronavirus (COVID-19) Japanese-language website

<https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/covid-19/Pages/covid-19-Japanese.aspx?lang=Japanese>

SBS coronavirus (COVID-19) Japanese-language website

<https://www.sbs.com.au/language/japanese/coronavirus-updates>

Jesper Falkheimer and Mats Heide, *Strategic Communication – An Introduction* (Routledge, 2018)

Diane Lennard, *Strategic Communication at Work: The Impact Paradigm* (Routledge, 2018)

(END)