

Consul-General of Japan in Sydney's Newsletter

No. 15 "COVID-safe Australia" - towards the post-COVID world

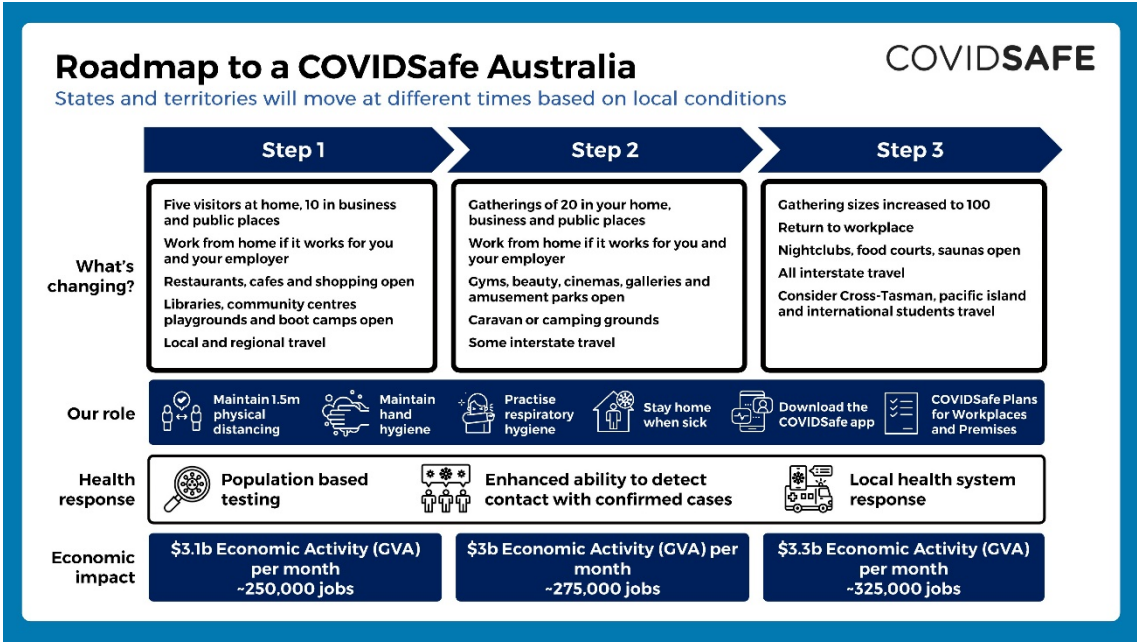
13 May 2020

Australia has succeeded in flattening the curve in the number of new cases of COVID-19 infections and has now moved on to ease restrictions. The next major challenge is to resume work and life in a sustainable manner while coexisting with COVID-19.

To this end, the Australian Government's National Cabinet has recently announced a three-step plan or roadmap towards a COVID-safe Australia. The state and territory governments will decide the actual timing and content of the steps taken in their own jurisdictions.

Restrictions are beginning to be eased in Japan and around the world, and with this, we are seeing increased discussion about "the post-COVID world".

How will the Australian Government proceed with easing restrictions from here on, and how will this affect the post-COVID world? Will there be lessons that Japan and the world can take from the Australian approach? Let us consider these questions together.



Roadmap to a COVID-safe Australia
(Prime Minister’s website, 8 May 2020)

On 8 May (Friday), at his press conference after the National Cabinet meeting, Prime Minister Morrison gave his assessment of the current situation. He stated that Australia was winning the fight against the virus and had achieved stability by strengthening the capacity of the health system while at the same time implementing economic measures such as the JobKeeper employment subsidy for businesses and the JobSeeker supplementary payment for the unemployed. Based on this, he set a new goal to achieve a sustainable and COVID-safe economy by July and announced the “Roadmap to a COVID-safe Australia” which outlines a three-step pathway for easing restrictions. The roadmap chart clearly states both the necessary health response and the projected economic impact including the addition of approximately 850,000 jobs in total over the three steps.

The roadmap denotes Step 3 as the “new normal” which will continue for as long as the virus continues to be a threat. Even during Step 3, social distancing at 1.5m will be maintained and international travel will continue to be restricted.

The easing of restrictions will reflect the conditions in each state and territory and the governments of each jurisdiction can decide to ease restrictions at their own pace. The role of the National Cabinet will be to review the situation every three weeks and assess progress.

Prime Minister Morrison also noted frankly that the measures are not without risk – there will be outbreaks, there will be more cases. Not everything will go to plan. There will be inconsistencies between states and territories due to differing circumstances. There will undoubtedly be some human error. No-one is perfect. Everyone is doing their best. The Prime Minister declared that to think or expect otherwise would be very unrealistic, and that we cannot allow our fear of going backwards from stopping us from going forwards - no matter the difficulties, people must work together to overcome them.

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NSW to ease COVID-19 restrictions from Friday 15 May

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The easing of restrictions will allow more businesses to open up, more people to stay in work and more personal freedoms.

After assessing National Cabinet's new framework, the NSW Government will ease the following restrictions from 15 May:

- outdoor gatherings of up to 10 people
- cafes and restaurants can seat 10 patrons at any one time
- up to 5 visitors to a household at any one time
- weddings up to 10 guests
- indoor funerals up to 20 mourners, outdoor funerals up to 30
- religious gatherings/places of worship up to 10 worshippers
- use of outdoor equipment with caution
- outdoor pools open with restrictions.

**NSW Government's announcement to ease restrictions
based on National Cabinet decisions
(NSW Government's website, 10 May 2020)**

The main reason it was decided that the easing of restrictions would be determined by the individual states and territories is because the circumstances in each jurisdiction vary significantly. New South Wales, which has Australia's largest city Sydney, has a population of around 8 million people, and the state has had the highest number of cases with new cases constantly emerging over a long period. Therefore, NSW is cautiously easing restrictions.

On 10 May (Sunday) after the National Cabinet, NSW Premier Berejiklian held a press conference and announced the easing of restrictions in NSW. From 15 May (Friday), up to 10 people can gather outdoors, up to 5 people can visit a household, and cafés and restaurants are able to seat up to 10 people. Compared to other states and territories, there are still major restrictions, and a timetable for the further easing of restrictions was not specified.

The Premier emphasised that the release of the National Cabinet’s roadmap should not raise people’s expectations too much and that NSW’s situation was still severe as explained above. She warned that the biggest threat is complacency and stressed the importance of social distancing, hygiene and testing.

In addition, she stated that schools would be reopening this month, explaining that from 11 May there would be a partial resumption of face-to-face teaching and it was possible that by the end of May all students would be back at school, emphasising it was a positive development. The Premier also asked the people of NSW for their understanding and cooperation as she expressed her determination to continue to work to secure employment, explaining the basic idea to have an appropriate balance between health and the economy, in other words, between lives and livelihoods.



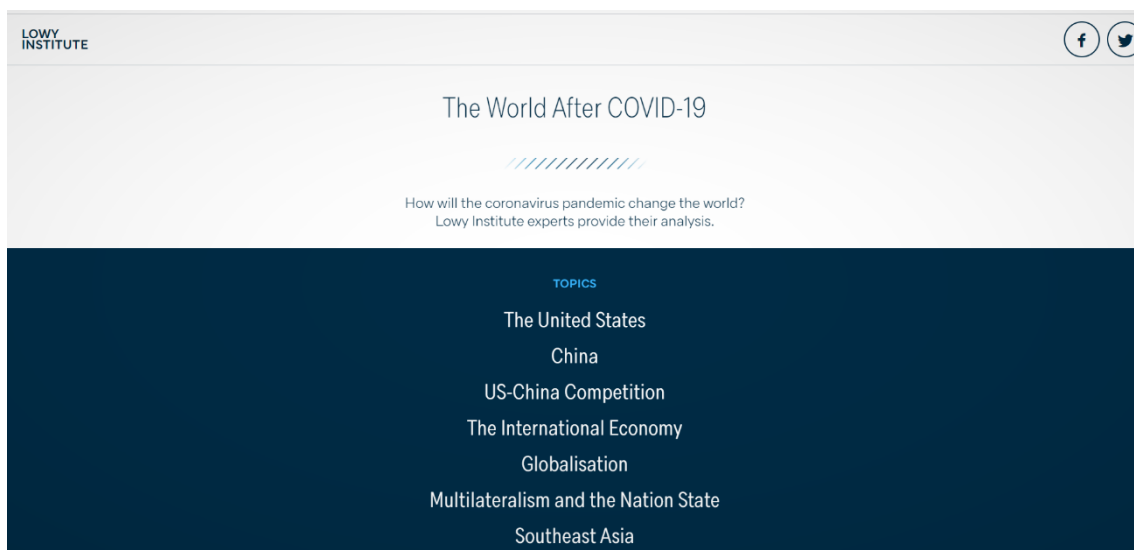
The Northern Territory’s “Roadmap to our new normal”
(Chief Minister Gunner’s Facebook, 8 May 2020)

At the opposite end of the spectrum is the Northern Territory (population 250,000). The NT is far removed from Australia’s major cities and from the outset had strict border restrictions. To date, the NT has had no community-transmitted infections, and since 6 April there have been no new cases apart from two Australian army military personnel who returned to Darwin from the Middle East. It was against

this background that the NT Government announced the easing of restrictions in its own “roadmap to the new normal” on 30 April (Thursday), more than a week ahead of the National Cabinet releasing the national roadmap on 8 May. The NT’s roadmap plans to ease restrictions in three phases, from 1 May (Friday), 15 May (Friday) and 5 June (Friday).

When holding press conferences, Chief Minister Gunner emphasises that the NT is having the greatest success against COVID-19 nationally. However, he also explains that it takes very little for one or two infections to become a cluster of infections that can spread, and he stresses that continued vigilance is crucial, asking Territorians for their cooperation. The Chief Minister repeatedly explains that the opening of Territory borders would only occur at the very final stage of the fight against COVID-19, seeking the understanding of people inside and outside the Territory.

In the NT, daily life is already resuming, well ahead of other states. School attendance rates fell at one point to as low as approximately 30%, but this term (term 2), full school attendance has become the norm, and currently the attendance rate is around 80%, which is in line with last year. Social distancing (1.5m) and handwashing will still be essential, but it is planned that from 15 May (Friday), restaurants and cafes will be able to serve food to dine-in patrons, and from 5 June (Friday), bars will be able to open.



**“The World After COVID-19”
(Lowy Institute website, 9 April 2020)**

As the prospect of the “new normal” is in sight, around the world discussion is progressing regarding the post-COVID world. I believe it is essential at this turbulent point in history that we think about future directions from a broad perspective.

The Lowy Institute, an influential think-tank in Sydney, released a special feature in April called “The World After COVID-19” in which their researchers from various fields analysed future prospects relating to themes such as US-China relations, the international economy, globalisation, multilateralism, South-East Asia, the Pacific Islands, developing nations among others. In early May, the Canberra-based Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) released the first volume of its strategy report, entitled “After Covid-19: Australia and the world rebuild”. It is a comprehensive approach covering a wide range of fields with the input of multiple researchers. In conclusion, the report urges Australia to work with other liberal democracies to provide for a foundation of global stability while responding to humanitarian imperatives and emphasises the need to ensure human security.

In order to strengthen Japan-Australia relations, it is also important to follow debate in Japan. For example, I read with great interest the dialogue between think-tank chairman Funabashi Yoichi and historian Hosoya Yuichi in which they analysed and predicted how the world would be after COVID-19 from a historical perspective. In the field of economics and business, Toyama Kazuhiko’s book “Surviving the Coronavirus Shock – a plan to rebuild Japan’s economy” gives analysis and predictions based on his previous experience gained from surviving many economic crises and corporate revitalisations. I was particularly impressed by his message that when it comes to crisis management and leadership, you must apply 200% of your total energy and 200% of your management effort towards both the “now (what is in front of you)” and the “future (long-term challenges)”. Another example, the Japan Association of Corporate Executives published a book before the coronavirus outbreak called “Japan, a frog in boiling water with no sense of crisis: there is no future in continuing along the same path”. I feel that issues defined in this book, such as wellbeing, innovation and sustainability, and its various prescriptions, now seem even more pertinent as we move towards a post-COVID world.



**Signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the NSW Government
and NEC regarding the Smart City Development
(Our website, 23 April 2020)**

However, as we face the post-COVID world, we must do more than just learn lessons. It is important to make things concrete and move them forward. In February, the Japan/Tokyo Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI/TCCI) Economic Mission visited Sydney, and in March, the Japan-Australia Infrastructure Networking Meeting was held. Building on this momentum, we have been consulting with stakeholders in the Federal and NSW Governments as well as in the Japanese business community using tele-conferences.

At the end of last month, the NSW Government and NEC signed a Memorandum of Understanding regarding the Smart City Development over video conference. I stated the following three points at the signing: 1) this MoU covers important fields particularly at this time when we are faced with the issue of coronavirus, 2) it is a great strength that ties of trust exist between Japan and Australia across so many fields, from security through science and technology innovation, to cultural and personal exchange, and 3) I will continue to strive so that even more Japanese businesses would decide to develop opportunities in NSW, having a synergistic effect.



**Rose Bay Beach open for swimming and exercise only
(10 May 2020)**

Australia has taken a new step towards realizing a COVID-safe Australia. There will be difficulties on the path ahead while seeking to achieve a balance between the prevention of infection and reviving the economy. However, it is important that we not only tackle the issues immediately in front of us; we must also envisage the world we want to build beyond these immediate challenges and work towards realizing this goal. In today’s world, Australia and Japan are in truly fortunate positions. By showing active leadership, both countries can help to build the “post-COVID world”, and I would like to play my part by doing what I can here.

Roadmap to a COVID-safe Australia (Prime Minister’s website)

<https://www.pm.gov.au/media/update-coronavirus-measures-08may20>

NSW Government’s announcement to ease restrictions based on National Cabinet decisions (NSW Government website)

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/news/nsw-to-ease-covid-19-restrictions-from-friday-15-may>

The Northern Territory Government's "Roadmap to our new normal"
(NT Government webpage)

<https://coronavirus.nt.gov.au/steps-to-restart/roadmap-new-normal>

Lowy Institute "The World After COVID-19"

<https://interactives.lowyinstitute.org/features/covid19/>

Australian Strategic Policy Institute "After Covid-19: Australia and the world rebuild (Volume 1)"

<https://www.aspi.org.au/report/after-covid-19-australia-and-world-rebuild-volume-1>

Dialogue between Mr Funabashi Yoichi and Mr Hosoya Kazuichi in *Toyo Keizai* ONLINE (Japanese)

<https://toyokeizai.net/articles/-/347405>

<https://toyokeizai.net/articles/-/349171>

Toyama Kazuhiko *Surviving the Coronavirus Shock – a plan to rebuild Japan's economy* (Corona Shokku Sabaibaru – Nihonkeizai fukkoukeikaku) Bungeishunsha, 2020 (Japanese)

Japan Association of Corporate Executives (Author), Kobayashi Yoshimitsu (Supervisor) *Japan, a frog in boiling water with no sense of crisis: there is no future in continuing along the same path* (Kikikan-naki yude-gaeru Nihon – Kako no enchosenjoni mirai wa nai), Chuokoron-Shinsha, 2019 (Japanese)

Signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the NSW Government and NEC regarding the Smart City Development – Consulate-General of Japan in Sydney website

https://www.sydney.au.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/about_consul_generals_gallery_20.html#NECMoU

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